

Community Participation in Sustainable Rural Development

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ABSTRACT: *Efforts to develop our local communities in Nigeria through government-sponsored top-down approach have always floundered due to absence or restrictive participation of the large segments of the rural communities especially women. The study investigated the role of community participation in enthroning sustainable rural development in Nigeria. Using the analytical approach imbued with historical narratives, the study sought to ascertain whether community driven development (CDD) is better than the top-down approach in sustainable rural development in Nigeria. Amongst others, the study found that CDD is a preferred approach to rural development as it gives control over decision and resources to the time agents of change in rural communities. This approach allows stakeholders to freely decide what action to take and take responsibility for initiatives that affect their lives. Based on this, the study strongly argued that effective involvement of the local people in rural development will lead to the sustainable rural development in Nigeria. To achieve this, the local populace should be mobilized and in particular, women should be included in decision making processes, given inheritance rights and generally allowed to contribute to development initiatives in the rural areas in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: community participation, community-driven development, sustainable rural development

INTRODUCTION

Rural people need food, electricity, health care, decent housing, education, employment, entertainment, means of communication, facilities for social interactions, etc. Rural electrification and improved sanitation according to La – Anyane (1976), are also quite basic institutions in rural development; the latter is a measure of improved living standards and the former will arrest immigration of the youth, since the events in the towns can be brought to them in the rural areas. They can use electrical appliances and processing plants can be operated. There could also be better storage, heating and cooling and more attractive conditions of farming.

If a community or groups within it undertake to develop their neighborhoods without government assistance or assistance from international or philanthropic bodies such a self-help effort becomes the non-directive approach to community development. The non-directive approach is applied in the sense that efforts are made through some kind of self-effort or collective action in various communities to promote better living for the residents of those communities. Such projects, like the building of schools and colleges, construction of feeder roads linking one village or district with another, rural water supply schemes, town or village council hails, market and market stalls and sheds, rural bridges and culverts, recreational facilities, community group farms, farmers' cooperatives, maternity homes, and post offices could be implemented through this approach. Where the initiative for community self-help project is not coming from the people themselves, the government should stimulate the interest of the people towards rural development projects by offering incentives to communities.

“Community development through self-help projects is an honored tradition in Nigeria. In traditional society every member of the community had a role to play in community development, as a member of an extended family, an age set, a guild. With government, assuming formal responsibility for public service, individual participation is now a matter of voluntary effort. It is mediated through various voluntary associations: the most pervasive of which are the community development associations or ‘town union’. Others include youth associations and co-operative societies” (Ukwu, 2004).

Local leaders like age grade articulate their self-help programmes for the development of their various communities.

Age grade comprises persons who according to the society are regarded as people of the same age. There is variation in actual year which could be up to three or even five. One group is clearly distinguished from another one. They are marks of rites of initiation. Okonkwo (2013) noted that:

They had in the pre-colonial and colonial times concerned themselves with such traditional functions as maintenance of law and order, settlement of disputes between warring members, constructions and maintenance of roads and markets maintaining the cleanliness of local streams and protecting their communities from external aggression.

However, in recent times the age grades have diversified their roles to include newer activities which aid modernization. They have therefore in recent times played significant roles in educational, economic, political and social development of their various communities (Mabonguna, 1989).

Otite (1994) maintained that most town unions, in agreement with their traditional rulers, identified their felt needs. Many of the town unions mobilize their members and embarked on the provision of pipe borne water for example. Other embarked on rural electrification, construction of access roads, building of post offices and even civic centres/recreational parks. Many town unions have legislated on marriage practices examples of such towns include; Nsukka and Igbukwu town unions.

A traditional ruler is a person elected and installed by people of certain community in accordance with the ancestral chieftaincy rules, customs and tradition of the said community and who has received government recognition or staff of office. Originally, most Igbo people did not have traditional rulers and they depended much on delegated legislature for fear of abuse of office. When colonial masters came they introduced the idea of warrant chiefs to ease the administration of the rural people. The functions of a clan head as noted by section 15(1) of the Traditional Rulers law in Cross River State outline the functions of the clan head as follows:

1. To uphold the culture of his clan
2. To preside at traditional ceremonies affecting his clan
3. To serve as a co-coordinating force within the clan
4. To promote good relations between his clan and the neighboring clans
5. To disseminate among his people information emanating from government and to finish the local government and government with information relating to the problems and aspirations of his people.
6. In accordance with tradition and custom, to arbitrate in civil disputes referred to him by all the parties affected.
7. To serve as a rallying force in organizing community projects affecting the clan
8. To help in organizing his people towards implementation of social welfare schemes for the benefit of his people.
9. To perform traditional and ceremonial functions, and
10. To perform such other functions under any other functions as may be prescribed by or under any other written law.

The meaning of self-help entails strategies that induce progress in rural societies, not all of which involve action by governments. It could be related to an individual who alone has the resources to implement a project or project to satisfy the basic needs of a community. Similarly, it also implies coordinated efforts within a community to select and execute political, economic and social programmes addressed to the development of community. Igboeli (1992) postulated that self-help means the following:

1. The participation of citizens in an effort to improve of living with as much reliance as possible on their initiatives
2. Mobilization of the citizens to stimulate enthusiastic participation
3. The provision of human and material assistance by the government to encourage initiative in self-help and mutual help in order to make efforts of the citizens more effective and meaningful.

The CDD approach breaks with the conventional “top-down” approach that has never had a sustainable impact on beneficiaries’ living conditions. Instead, it developed a more democratic and inclusive “bottom-up” approach. CDD gives control over decisions and resources to the true agents of change in rural communities, i.e traditional organization; peer groups, women’s groups, producers’ unions organized by co-operatives etc. This approach allows stakeholders to freely decide what action to take, and take responsibility for initiatives that affect their lives. CDD has taught communities how action to set infrastructural priorities (drinking water

supply, health care centres, roads and schools) and how to achieve these goals in a cost-effective, transparent and sustainable way.

According to Imhabekhai (2010) participation of the citizen facilitates growth and development in any community. It has obvious advantage to the individual and the community, these includes:

- i. It gives the individuals a chance to participate in the socio-political process and economic development of his/her community, thereby improving process and capacity of choice.
- ii. It arouses the consciousness of representative members in dealing with their common problems and satisfying their individual needs.
- iii. It meets man's need for relatedness, for creativity, sense of belonging and for a frame of orientation toward a fulfilling future.
- iv. Citizen participation as a process provides an opportunity for the participants to learn from each other, unlearn bad habits and learn new ways of defending their human rights and improving their lots and the living conditions in the society.
- v. It allows for activity and involvement which encourage participants to widen their interests, acquire new skill of thinking, develop initiative and industry as well as discover inter-relationship that challenges attitude of community leaders.
- vi. It gives training to democratic leadership and selection process.
- vii. It promotes and strengthens community control, bringing about positive changes in the lives of the citizens and the communities which the participants live.
- viii. It promotes individual and collective responsibility in the community and is used to establish greater collaborative problem-solving mechanism among community leaders who have conflicting interest, diverse needs rapidly changing and emerging programmes (Justice, Development and Peace Commission, Ijebu-Ode, 1998).The needed funds for community development project(s) can be sourced or obtained through diverse ways. The following sources are some of the ways that may be explored or utilized in raising funds for community development projects:

- i. Payment of levies by community members and groups
- ii. Donations
- iii. Project launching
- iv. Conferment of chieftaincy titles
- v. Sale of community resources
- vi. Grants from government
- vii. Grants from local and international donor agencies
- viii. Payment of royalties
- ix. Sons and daughters abroad (Town Unions)
- x. Loans
- xi. Payments by property developers
- xii. Returns on community investments (Adepoju, 1976)

There are two principal sources from which funds can be sought for financing community development projects.

These are internal and external according to Onyishi (2010)

Internal sources:

- a. *Government Budgetary Allocation;*
- b. *Voluntary contributions by members of the community i.e. freewill donations;*
- c. *Levies on the community members – men, women and youth or poll tax;*
- d. *Support from wealthy community members/launching.*
- e. *Sale of community landed properties.*
- f. *Contribution from community sons and daughters abroad;*
- g. *Voluntary work by members of the community, and*
- h. *Proceeds from community income generating projects: cottage industries – garri processing, rice – mill, poultry farm, piggery, community farms amongst others.*

External Sources

1. *Supports from Government Development Agencies on the field, such as award of prizes to the best mobilized communities e.g. community development grants.*
2. *Matching grants*
3. *Technical advice given free of charge*
4. *Donor agencies that may donate both cash and equipment or initiate a project.*
5. *National and international non-governmental organizations such as WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, FAO, UNDP.*
6. *Developed/industrialized nations.*

Internalization of norms, values and roles result in deprivation for both inheritance and decision making rights for the female child. This is the major reason sustainable rural development has not been achieved. The goal of the National gender policy is to build a just society devoid of discrimination, harness the full potentials of all social groups regardless of sex of circumstance, promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well being of all citizens in order to achieve equitable rapid economic growth, evolve an evidence based planning and government system where human, social, financial and technological resource are efficiently and effectively deployed for sustainable development (National Gender Policy, 2006). The core strategies for achieving the objectives of the national gender policy include:

- a. *Policy partnership and programme reforms through mainstreaming of gender concerns at all levels.*
- b. *Gender education and capacity building to enhance necessary technical expertise and positive gender culture.*
- c. *Legislative reforms to guarantee gender justice and respect for human rights and*
- d. *Economic reforms for enhanced productivity and sustainable development, especially that which addresses the need of women and children, and other vulnerable groups (National Gender Policy, 2006).*

The gender policy addresses the systematic inequalities between women and men in our society without ignoring the fundamental difference between them. More importantly, the gender policy priorities the empowerment of women as an entry point to achieving gender quality, and seek balance of power relations between men and women for the optimum benefit of both parties (National Gender policy, 2006). The number of people involved in the process of production determines both the input and output in a given economy, Arisi and Aghure (2010) observed that a situation where a section of the society is denied equal participation in the

process of development even though they are capable, will not speak well for sustainable development. Gender discrimination has been identified as placing limitation.

Despite the contributions of women in the agricultural sector, their role in promoting economic growth and social stability continues to be inadequately recognized and undervalued. The following factors are responsible:

- a. The male dominated culture in Nigeria which gives women an inferior position in the society;
- b. Customs that forbid women from owning land, taboos and the sexual division of labour which keeps women subordinate to men; and
- c. The problem of unpaid productive activities performed by women at the domestic front (National Gender Policy, 2006).

Statement of the problem

Many rural areas lack good infrastructural facilities and social services. Since these are the arteries and channels of rural development, it has been difficult to get to some the rural areas or convince them that they are part and parcel of the government of the day. Undeniably, most rural communities lack many basic facilities. Much of this can be ascribed to the neglect of rural areas by government departments charged with the assignment of providing such basic needs. There is almost lavish and ritualistic supply of infrastructures to urban centres and an utter neglect of the development is both direct and indirect. Poor infrastructure affects rural productivity and therefore retards progress. Less directly, the absence of depopulation which is definitely a cog in the wheel of rural development (Onokerhboraye and Okafor 1994).

Arisi and Agghure (2010) observed that a situation where a section of the society is denied equal participation in the process of development even though they are capable, will not speak well for sustainable development. Gender discrimination has been identified as placing limitation on a section of the society making it almost impossible for such group to be given opportunity to serve their father land.

Gender gap reduces productivity and diminishes contributions, and does not only affect women's well-being and that of their families, but also imposes high cost on the economy through productivity losses (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2013). Gender-egalitarian attitudes are among the factors that transform economic development in the cultural process of human development (Inglehart&Welzel, 2005).

According to Elom and Ngaji (2011) land is generally controlled by men. Women only acquire use rights through relationship to a man as either husband or father. Maintaining those rights depend on the continuity of the relationship. Thus, women's productivity is often considered because they do not have rights to make decisions and often cannot get credit with land right. In some localities for instance, land tenure system does not permit women ownership of land. In such circumstance like Enugu State, women merely depend on men to get piece of land for agricultural use. According to Elom and Ngaji (2011), women in rural areas most often do not have enough valuable to present as collateral for obtaining loan or credit access to such facilities are frustrated due to lack of collateral securities. According to Adamu (2001) most women farmers in the rural areas own fewer tools than men since farm capital contributes positively to yield; women farmers are likely to have lower yield than male farmers.

Women are responsible for carrying out 70% of agricultural labour, 50% of animal husbandry related activities and 60% of food processing activities yet women have access to less than 20% of available agricultural resources – a serious impediment to their maximizing agricultural production (Ntunde, 2004). Men are generally required to be chief actors in agricultural production and as such are often the main participants in and/or recipients of programme – related supports.

The non-participation of women in decision making both in the family and community at large affect the level of women participation in rural development. This reduces significantly women acceptance and support of community development projects.

Objectives of the study

The general objective is to find out why there is low participation in community development. The specific objectives include:

1. To examine whether the top-bottom approach to community development is responsible for low participation in community development.
2. To examine the failure of the government to stimulate community development is responsible for low participation in community development.
3. To examine gender inequality has reduced the acceptance and participation of women in community development.

Research questions:

1. Is the top-bottom approach to community development responsible for low participation in community development?
2. Is the government inability to stimulate community development responsible for low participation in community development?
3. Has gender inequality reduced labour output in community development?

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study design is largely descriptive and analytical with anecdotal evidence gleaned from a qualitative and historical literature on rural development, community development associations and women participation in rural development in over 250 linguistic groups in Nigeria from pre-colonial times to modern era.

Data

Data for the study were gathered from textbooks, journals and internet materials. These were complemented by oral traditions (interviews, group discussions with stakeholders) in traditional Nigerian communities by traditional rulers, community development associations, women groups and development institutions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Self-Help Development Strategy

Graf (1980) has contended that community development ideology was hatched by the British colonialists in Nigeria to under develop the people through this negative manipulative strategy. He noted same strategy, he said, he said, is employed by indigenous rulers in the post-colonial state. He thus contends that this strategy predicated upon the colonial policy of economic exploitation of the local areas, is an instrument used to sustain the self-interest of the ruling classes while the rural communities suffer under poor, harsh and stagnated conditions.

Mabogunje (1980) observed that if a community or groups within it undertake to develop their neighborhoods without government assistance from international or philanthropic bodies, such a self-help effort becomes the non-directive approach to community development. The non-directive approach is applied in the sense that efforts are made through some kind of self-effort or collective action in various communities to promote living for the residents of those communities. Such projects, like the building of schools and colleges, construction of feeder roads linking one village or direct with another, rural water supply schemes, town or village council halls, market and market skills and sheds, rural bridges and culverts, recreational facilities, community group farms, farmers' cooperatives, maternity homes, and post offices could be implemented through this approach.

Onyeozu (2007) in his field work on self-help efforts conducted in Benue State reported the same trend in the activities of various communities. In Ankpa Local Government Authority in Benue State, Chiefs and Traditional Heads were made honorary Chairmen of development areas to promote self-help projects. In the study panning between 1968 to 1978, it was discovered that self-help groups gave priority to economic and social welfare projects and that, based on donations, levies, community labour and matching grants from the local government, primary and post primary school, clinics, maternity homes, roads, bridges, postal agencies, market stalls and town halls were completed.

In fact, self-help as a strategy for community development has continued to be an issue for serious contentions, Nnoli (1980) sees it as the last resort to their survival due to government neglect. According to him, the community development process, arises from the crying need of the rural population for social welfare services. The unwillingness of the ruling class to provide these amenities, the exploitation of the ruling class over competition among communities for those social artifacts which are deemed to reflect social progress, and the exploitation by the ruling class over the tendency of Nigerians to invest more time, energy and resources in those tasks approved by their community than in those sanctioned by the national collectivity through the state.

The current trend in the organization of co-operatives in the rural areas according to (Onokerhboraye and Okafor 1994), of many less developed countries has been towards the establishment of multi-purpose movements embracing marketing, thrift, credit and supply of agricultural inputs. This multi-purpose organization may serve as a useful institution for rural development. Co-operatives of this nature require effective organization, leadership and entrepreneurial capacity which take a long time to acquire. They are however necessary for the

success of co-operation. What is required is government support and assistance so that co-operatives can mobilize indigenous capital for improved agricultural and community development.

Diversification of agriculture involves improving the quality of agricultural products as well as ensuring the industrial use of these agricultural products in such a way that they are beneficial to the rural people. Agricultural development need to be improved side by side with agro-allied industries which involves setting rural industries that will be oriented towards the extraction and use of agricultural products, they may be palm oil milling industries, cashew, vegetable oil, starch, palm kernel industries. The government should assist the rural farmers to get modern farm implements.

The role of women in rural development

Ogunjimi(1984), noted that the traditional women is jack-of-all-trade in the home – the cook, the washerwomen, the cleaner and the child incubator. According to Emuakpor (1981), in the rural Nigerian setting, women bear the major share of traditional burdens of work in agriculture, animal husbandry, food processing, water and fuel shortage in addition to home and family tasks. Obviously, the traditional woman works for longer hours than her male counterpart.

Agriculture: Women form the bulk of peasant farmers in the rural areas who feed the local communities and the teeming population of the cities. According to Okeyo (1979), agricultural work done by women includes replanting activities, such as land preparation, digging and ploughing, followed by planting the seeds, cutting, hoeing and weeding. Women account for between 60 to 80 percent of agricultural labour force in rural areas.

Animal Husbandry: Women often gather leaves and other items that animals feed on. Their work also includes grazing sheep and goats and in some places, even cattle which mean walking over long distances in search of pasture or water. In the case of cattle, women milk them and do other preservation processing that might be required in both agriculture and animal husbandry. In some areas, women come about their animals either by buying them or could be given a female animal by somebody to keep so that if the animal reproduces they could share them proportionally (Aguene 1998).

Distributive Trade: Women are mostly responsible for effective distribution and supplies of goods, particularly food items and services to and from the cities. Thus, women play indispensable roles in the commercial life of nations. Even where women are secluded, they manage to process foodstuffs and other items for their little children to sell for them. Women also dominate such industries as pottery, cloth weaving and catering services in most rural areas.

Health Services: Women play very important roles in the environmental sanitation of the rural societies by keeping homes, village squares, village shrines, market places, churches, and other social centre clean – therefore playing indispensable role in enhancing the public health of the societies. Many of the nurses, midwives and other para-medical staff in the dispensaries, health centres and hospitals in most rural areas are women. Staying around a sick relation in the rural

hospitals, treating of wounds in the family are mostly done by women. They show sympathy and care to destitutes (Aguene 1998).

Political Activities: Few women are now elected into legislative houses in the local government, state and federal houses of representative. Some women are local government chairpersons, commissioners, advisers and ministers etc.

Sustainable Development

The federal government entered into partnership with some international organizations for the development of Nigerian rural areas which included National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy/NEEDS/ Fadama Development Projects, Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), Sustainable Development Goal (SDGS) etc.

Enugu State Government has domesticated these sustainable Development Goals with prompt payment of counterpart fund to the international organizations through the focal person in the state. The state government has been able to provide many projects for the people through this partnership including the following:

- a. Affordable water
- b. Classroom blocks for primary and secondary schools
- c. Renovation and building of health centres
- d. Subsidized agricultural projects
- e. Training of local leaders to coordinate rural development
- f. Construction of local roads
- g. Construction of lock up shops in local markets
- h. Empowerment of women and implementation of 35% affirmative action in all employment including political appointments, economic empowerment leads to other empowerment; social, religious, political. This made women to become sensitive to their empowerment and contributed more to rural development than before.
- i.

Enugu State Rural Development Strategy: The government is committed to its inclusive Rural Development Approach. This made Enugu State Ministry of Rural Development borrow the idea of counterpart funding to develop the rural areas. This involves a community identifying and paying some percentage of the total cost as community fee to the ministry of rural development. Many communities have taken advantage of this golden opportunity to develop their own communities. The problem with this type of development system is that it is only organized communities that can benefit. This is why the government adopted the idea he who wears the shoe knows where it pinches him. The government gave communities the sum of ten million naira each through the ministry of rural development to solve their immediate needs in 2018. This is to achieve the inclusive Rural Development Approach adopted by the state government.

Counterpart funding believes that a community creates the most effective political and economic solutions to challenges only when its citizens, organizations and networks regardless of their position and condition co-create and implement solutions together. It is also believed that it is possible to accelerate this process by developing the capacities of leaders,

organizations and networks to identify challenges and implement their solutions more effectively (Enugu State Blue Print, 2016). The government through the ministry of Rural Development often organizes seminars and training for community leaders who are expected to coordinate community development projects in their various communities since people cannot give what they do not have. The government always insisted that women must be included in the training and as community leaders. (Aguene 2019)

Participation of citizens according to Onyishi 2010

Participation must not be token; it must involve both men and women. Effective participation could be achieved via:

- a. Capacity building for women and women organizations;
- b. Effective networking and collaboration with other civil society organizations and community development associations;
- c. Developing linkages with relevant groups, institutions at different levels;
- d. Community based organizations getting involved in community development;
- e. Civil society forums which should be organized at the state and Local Government levels at least three times a year to enhance public debate;
- f. Capacity building or empowerment – acquiring enabling skills and attitudes using informal and non-formal training (vocational training, apprenticeship, technical education;
- g. The utilization of the vibrant micro-organization of the people themselves to create in their communities continuous drive to survive (using Isusu groups, co-operative societies, the church, micro-credit banks, community banks and women associations);
- h. Empowerment developed through the psychological instillation of self-confidence into the people.

The strategies that should be adopted at the Local Government level include the following:

1. Ensure proper implementation of all the policies and programmes as designed and directed by both the Federal and State Governments as they affect the Local Government Areas.
2. Procure and appropriately distribute fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides to farmers in the rural areas.
3. Develop awareness campaigns on the use of improves varieties of crops and better methods of farming practices.
4. Create and develop competitive programmes for farmers in the rural communities where farmers agricultural products.
5. Extension services could be provided by the local councils to farmers in need of their services.

Promoting Educational Development

Education is a major factor that can help to free people from the harsh grips of abject poverty. Qualitative education is a prerequisite for any policy that will reduce poverty because it widens the people's minds about the environment and then they can discover their potentials and utilize them. The policy trust is to ensure a good qualitative education both at the primary and secondary school levels. The policy objectives therefore, can be specified as follows:

Good governance extends beyond the capacity of the public sector to the rules that create a legitimate, effective and efficient framework for the conduct of public policy. It implies managing public affairs in a transparent, accountable, participatory and equitable manner. It

also entails effective participation in public policy-making, the prevalence of the rule of law and an independent judiciary, institutional checks and balances through horizontal and vertical separation of powers.

Funding of community development projects

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The idea is to involve the rural people fully through their town unions, age grades, and other similar organizations in planning and implementing policies that are designed to improve their economic, social, political and cultural lives. This will enable them to make positive contributions to other rural and national development. The effective involvement of the local people in rural development will lead to the attainment of self-reliance. The emphasis will, therefore, be on a concerted approach to mobilizing the people and their resources the town/community unions, age grade and other similar organizations in partnership with the local authorities, that is, local government. This direct involvement of the local people will not only help to harness their potential resources for development purposes but will also result in leadership training, active civic culture and patriotism (Onyishi, 2010).

The CDD approach breaks with the conventional “top-bottom” approach that has never had a sustainable impact on beneficiaries’ living conditions. Instead, it developed a more democratic and inclusive “bottom-up” approach. CDD gives control over decision and resources to the true agents of change in rural communities, i.e traditional organizations; peer groups, women’s groups, producer’s unions organized by co-operatives etc. this approach allows stakeholders to freely decide what action to take, and take responsibility for initiatives that effects their lives. Gender inequality has been the major obstacle delaying sustainable rural development by the all-inclusive approach to community development as the government envisaged. This is because sustainable development is based on the three pillars of environmental protection, social wellbeing and social equality.

Recommendations

We should seek to forge a closer connection between the poverty and sustainable growth. This perspective is not that growth achieved by the privileged will pull the poor out of poverty, but that the mobilization and enhancement of the resources and activities of the poor themselves can uphold their dignity and free them from the shackles of misery, while at the same time making a vital contribution to overall sustainable growth.

Women should be included in decision making given inheritance rights economically empowered women should be encouraged to join organizations. Meetings for rural development should be fixed at night or lonely place so that women will not fear sexual harassment. This is because sustainable rural development rests on three pillars of environmental protection economic well being and social equality. Where the initiative for community self help project is not coming from the people themselves, the government should stimulate the interest of the people towards rural development projects by offering incentives to rural people.

Town/village development committee

Membership

This committee will be headed by the Chairman of the town/village union or town/village head as appropriate. The membership of the committee shall include representatives of age grades, women's organizations, co-operatives, social clubs, religious organizations, According to Onyishi 2010

Functions: the committee will

- ❖ *Coordinate all projects of execution and work groups including social clubs within the town or village.*
- ❖ *Select representatives of the community to the Local Government Development Committee.*
- ❖ *Initiate community development projects for proper consultation and planning.*
- ❖ *Ensure that there is overlap and conflict in the initiation and execution of community projects.*
- ❖ *Encourage each social clubs, work groups, women's organizations, etc to indicate projects that benefit the entire community, and*
- ❖ *Mobilize people for speedy execution of projects without prejudice to these functions of the town/village development committees, each work group such as age grades, women's organizations, youth organizations etc. can initiate and fund its own project with or without Government assistance, provided that all funds collected publicly must be accounted for.*

Women should be included in decision making given inheritance rights economically empowered. Women should be encouraged to join organizations. Where the initiative for community self-help project is not coming from the people themselves, the government should stimulate the interest of the people towards rural development projects by offering incentives to rural people.

The Beijing platform for Action recognizes that women's full representation and participation in decision-making in Government, policy making positions in Government, policy making and political parties could act as a means of accelerating the transformation of economic, social and political power relations in societies. Disaggregating political participation by sex provides insight into the gender gaps that exist in governance in Nigeria. The result is inadequate participation and acceptance of rural development programmes by women.

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