

Assessing the impact of community development efforts in the nigeria`s state of zamfara.

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-----ABSTRACT-----

In Nigeria, as other parts of the world, effort has not been fully committed on the upliftment of rural areas to the desired level as the lives of rural families are still characterized by poverty (Olabode and Elegbede, 2010). In order to forestall this trend, various state governments in Nigeria prominent among which is Zamfara state have embarked on one campaign or the other like the Community and Social Development Project (CSDP), Community Driven Development (CDD) initiative etc with the intention of sensitizing the rural populace towards mobilizing themselves for community works by means of extant literature, this paper was able to find out that In order to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in community development efforts, there is the need for the local people as well as their resources to be organized and made ready for productive actions. After some initial organization, another key step in the activities is to engage the local people and give the diverse range of citizens the opportunity to be involved. Engagement of people occurs throughout a community development process, but it is crucial to actively foster involvement early in the process.

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I. INTRODUCTION

If development is the development of man, as an individual and as a social being, aiming at his liberation and at his fulfillment, it cannot but stem from the inner core of each society. It relies on what a human group has; its natural environment, its cultural heritage, the creativity of men and women who constitute it, becoming richer through exchange between them and other groups. It entails the definition of development styles and of life styles. This is the meaning of an endogenous and self-reliant development which stimulates creativity and leads to a better utilization of production factors, thus laying the basis for a search for new resources, for utilizing known resources in new ways and reduces vulnerability and dependence. This forms the basic rudiment of community development that every government must consider when formulating national development plans and strategies. In Nigeria, effort has not been fully committed on the upliftment of rural areas to the desired level as the lives of rural families are still characterized by poverty (Olabode and Elegbede, 2010). In order to forestall this trend, various state governments in Nigeria prominent among which is Zamfara state have embarked on one campaign or the other like the Community and Social Development Project (CSDP), Community Driven Development (CDD) initiative etc with the intention of sensitizing the rural populace towards mobilizing themselves for community works (Garba, 2011). Marcel Proust *posits that "the real voyage of discovery consists not of seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."*

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

In order to adequately explore that issue under discussion, there is the need for certain concepts to be clarified. Those concepts are;

A community is a group of people with a common background or shared interest in the society. The community is both the means and the end of community development. The community itself takes action and participates together. It is through this action that the community becomes more vital, not just economically but as a strong functioning community in itself.

"Development" is a process that increases choices. It means new options, diversification, thinking about apparent issues differently and anticipating change (Christenson et.al., 1989). Development involves change, improvement and vitality – a directed attempt to improve participation, flexibility, equity, attitudes, the function of institutions and the quality of life. It is the creation of wealth – wealth meaning the things people value, not just dollars (Shaffer, 1989). It leads to a net addition to community assets, avoiding the "zero sums" situation where a job created "here", is a job lost "there".

Putting the two terms together, then a new concept emerges “Community Development”. Community Development means that a community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community. Community development combines the idea of “community” with “development”. As discussed earlier, the concept of “community” was termed as a group of people with a shared identity. Hence, community development relies on interaction between people and joint action, rather than individual activity – what some sociologists call “collective agency” (Flora and Flora, 1993). Community development often is associated with terms such as community capacity building, community vitality, empowerment, rural development or self-reliance. The basic elements of collective action, ownership and improved circumstances are common to all these ideas. There may be slight differences in emphasis. For example, while community capacity building focuses on enhancing the assets and abilities of the community, the term is essentially synonymous with community development.

III. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

Economic development is part of community development. Local industry development involves facilitation of relatively small groups of industry people addressing specific issues, such as discussion groups or market alliances. This is part of economic development. Economic development involves many of the elements of community development, such as participation, rethinking, action learning etc. However, it specifically aims to improve the relative economic position of the community. Flora et. al. (1992) argues that it does not necessarily lead to improved quality of life nor involve “collective agency”. Economic development largely aims to improve employment, income and the economic base of the community. Economic development is part of community development, which seeks to build all five community capitals, not only enhancing the community’s economy but its environment, social structures, attitudes and assets.

Practitioners debate whether community development or economic development comes first. Some argue that communities need jobs and income before broader social and human development can occur. Others maintain that new attitudes and knowledge, together with greater organization and wider relationships in the community, underpin economic development. Many community development practitioners describe their work as community economic development.

The present widespread concern for grassroots participation is not without a history. It is a diligent effort to correct an historical error in development approaches which tended to marginalize the rural traditional sector. This error had led to the creation of certain categories of rural populations regarded as less privileged and more vulnerable such as women, unemployed, sharecroppers, seasonal labourers, tenants, small farmers, small artisans, nomadic pastoralists, the destitute, etc. The development approaches of the past have tended to relegate the 'grassroots' to a mere 'resource' for the development of the urban centers and the metropolis. The traditional rural sector was often seen as a resource potential that needed mobilization (for example through the rhetoric of participation) in order to provide free or cheap labour for 'rural modernization' programmes, or for commercial plantations that fed the populations of the cities. The traditional sector was often seen as the source of cheap labour for the modern urban sector. On the other hand, one may wonder who largely appropriated the benefits of increased agricultural exports. The net effects of such economic growth stimulated by the mobilization of rural resources will include better wages for the staff of farmer cooperatives, increased supply of imported capital and urban consumer goods, etc. Of course the traditional rural sector benefits as well from such economic growth but at minimal magnitudes compared to the urban sector. In the final analysis, the 'grassroots' will in most cases be found to play a passive role in such developmental processes, appropriating the least of the benefits.

IV. IMPACT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EFFORT IN ZAMFARA STATE’S LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

An effective participation for grassroots development would only be realized where the grassroots have the freedom to make their own decisions and set their own development priorities, draw their own plans; implement (with their own built-in monitoring and evaluation systems) and ensure a fair share of the fruits of their work (including any costs thereof) for each member of their community (Francis, 1988). Just like in every other nation, states and societies, the following are the appreciable changes achieved through community development efforts.

- a) For community development to occur, people in a community must believe that working together can make a difference and organize their resources to address their shared needs collectively. Through community development effort, peace and harmony has been entrenched into the relationship among the people of Zamfara state and this can be substantiated from the fact that in the recent time of gross insecurity in the country, none of the usual bombings, killing and religious clashes has been reported in the state.
- b) Community development is a process that increases choices. It creates an environment where people can exercise their full potential to lead productive, creative lives. The goal of the CDD initiative is to

improve services for human development strategy. It is designed as a poverty reduction project which seeks to empower the poor by giving them resources as grants, to implement and supervise community initiated multi-sectoral project (Garba, 2011).

- c) Community development is a process where people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and communities are integrated into the life of the nation enabling them to contribute fully to national progress. Through the various community development efforts in Zamfara state, a considerable improvement has been achieved in the partnership between Local Government Authorities and Communities on human development related projects and builds the capacity of the former to effectively deliver services to their people and the communities.

V. CONCLUSION

In order to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in community development efforts, there is the need for the local people as well as their resources to be organized and made ready for productive actions. After some initial organization, another key step in the activities is to engage the local people and give the diverse range of citizens the opportunity to be involved. Engagement of people occurs throughout a community development process, but it is crucial to actively foster involvement early in the process.

There are several important aspects of engagement. Firstly, it involves understanding the existing concerns of community members. This means identifying what people have passion for, what they feel community issues are, and how interested they are in being involved. Basic questions here are "What are your concerns?", "How would you like your community to be?", "Would you like to be involved?" Secondly, it is important to ask citizens how they would like to participate. In many community efforts local leaders overlook this. They often choose participation opportunities that they are familiar with, often opting for traditional meetings and committees by default. Asking people how they would like to be involved and actively seeking alternative organizational arrangements and events that are fun and social will help people participate. Often this leads to a judgment about how prepared the community is to conduct a development effort, and how people would like to plan the process. It also generates trust, involvement and identifies local "champions".

Thirdly, some community members may wish to pursue a particular idea they have passion for, such as a new business, street cafe or a shop local campaign. The process needs to allow these people to get started on acting on the idea even though not everyone may agree or it may not seem to be a priority. Passion drives community development and a balance must be struck between supporting passionate people and longer term self-examination and prioritization.

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