

# The Role of Local Government Council in Actualizing Effective Community Development Activities in Nigeria:

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Date of Submission: 14-06-2023

Date of Acceptance: 24-06-2023

## ABSTRACT

The paper examined community development practice and the role local government council play in actualizing effective community development activities/programmes in our communities, arguing that the local government administration in the country today has become the nerve-centre of the socio-economic and political life of the country. As an administration in the grassroots the system has effectively utilized fulcrum of local development and growth in the process the local government focus on fostering or promoting public enlightenment among the masses, with the aim of enabling the local populace to actively participate in decision that affect their well-being. In this regard the local government become a vehicle for the transmission of education and information for the rural dwellers. The active involvement and unseasoned support for the promotion of education among the masses is an important strategy for community and national development.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Community development is now seen as a powerful tool for mobilizing and integrating people into meaningful contributions to the growth of their areas in particular and the nation in general. This awareness had led many communities to embark on activities that could transform their rural environment into urban and better developed setting. It could equally general the people's interest in communal living and socio-economic ventures (Omoruyi 2001).

The local government on the other hand as the third tier of government is charged with the responsibility of providing a system of administration at the local level under which local communities are organized for the maintenance of law and order, the provision of some range of

social service and public amenities and the encouragement of the cooperation and participation of the inhabitants in joint effort forwards the enhancement of their wellbeing or social well-being. Anyanwu (1999) as in Omoruyi (2001), opined that the local government provides the communities with the formal organizational framework which enables them to conduct their affairs effectively and regulate the actions of their members for the general good of all the people. Thus, in local government administration, the interest of the people is paramount. The interest of the people in local affairs leads to the growth of their interest in the way in which local government works (Ford Foundation Report, 1962).

## Objectives Of Community Development

Community development aims to realize a feasible socioeconomic improvement, with the effort of the individuals as a support. Eleberi et al. (2014) summed some objectives of community development in Nigeria as follows:

- To motivate and educate the people for self-help in the community.
- To develop responsible local leadership among community members.
- To inculcate among the members of a community a sense of citizenship and spirit of civic consciousness.
- To strengthen and introduce democracy at the grassroots level, through the creation and revitalizations of institutions designed to serve as instrument for local participation in the community.
- To introduce a self-generative, self-sustaining and enduring process of growth.
- To allow people to establish and maintain cooperative and harmonious relationship; and to bring about gradual and self-chosen in the life

of a community with a minimum stress and disruption (p. 165).

In line with this, Olaitan (2008) and Asabe (2012) further mention the objectives as follows:

- Provision of educational facilities to the immediate members of the community.
- Provision of essential amenities such as feeder roads, culverts, bridges, market, and so on;
- Provision of cooperative organizations; participation in environmental sanitation; construction of dams and sinking of wells to provide water for both human and animals; and also
- Provision of health facilities such as dispensaries, maternities, leprosy clinic and enlightenment on impact of population growth (p. 55, 56).

#### **Local Government Administration and Community Development Efforts**

Local government is regarded as a grassroot administration. This is because local government council governs a geographically demarcated area, which in most cases, consists of people with same culture, same language and are closely knit. As grassroot administration local government councils are charge with the responsibilities of providing services, which the central government cannot effectively provide for the people because of its volume of work and responsibilities and perhaps because of distance from the people concerned. (Imhabekhai, 2009)

Interestingly, Oluwatobi (2019) defined local Government as a political division of a country or (in a government frameworks) state, which comprises bylaw and has considerable organizing power over related issues, empowering the authority to force charges or to apply work for endorsed reason.

On the other hand, The United Nations Define Community Development as “a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. And the International Association for Community Development defines it as both “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity, or interest, in urban and rural setting”. Following the adoption of the IACD definition in 2016, the association has gone on to produce international standards for Community Development practice. The values and

ethos that should underpin practice can be expressed as: Commitment to rights, solidarity, and democracy, and equality, environmental and social justice.

Basically, the objectives of local Government in Nigeria, as postulated by Nwankwo (2002), area as follows: to provide certain opportunities to practice democracy; to provide certain basic services for the citizens at the local level; to join the local citizens to solve their community problems and needs that could not be solved by the individuals alone; to become the nearest government to the local citizens at all levels of needs, such as for reconstruction of roads bridges in the rural area, supporting rural farmers through agricultural machineries, provision of recreation centers, construction of fish pond and public toilets, and building of hospitals, motor parks, and public libraries; and to become a useful instrument for the central and state government in the governance of the country

Globally, local government councils exist according to Egonmwan (1984:46) for the following reasons:

- i. There are many amenities which can best be provided on a local basis rather than on a central basis especially where the needs of the people are many and the resources of the central government are insufficient to cover all the requirements demanded. In such cases, local initiatives and efforts must be called upon to provide the money, material and man power for services, which are beyond the capacity of the central government.
- ii. The central government in most cases is remote from the local community and cannot expect to know the individual wishes of the many communities all over the country. This problem is better solved by having local government.
- iii. Different towns and districts have different traditions and customs, perhaps different languages. The people are proved of their home towns and their fellow citizens who live there. These traditions are better preserved under local government. Local government provides a healthy spirit of competition between units of population making them jealous of each other's standard and eager to develop their own standard of living.
- iv. Local government provide a secure and peaceful background in which the individual members of society may pursue their prosperity and happiness.

- v. Local governments provide services, which members of society want and are prepared to pay for but as individual citizens, they could not buy or provide for themselves, e.g., Roads, water supply.

For effective community development to take place in the society, community development officers and adult educators must be involved through collective effort. Basically, community development projects do not support individuals to labour independently to recover the poor livelihood situation of their citizens in the communities without involving the local government administration who serve as a link between the community, state, and federal governments (Aruma, 2011). Community Development projects, in any case energize individuals to continuously investigate the openings of coming collectively to work as a cluster to advance/alter that will offer assistance to address viably winning issues within the communities and society at large.

#### **Functions of Local Government in Community Development**

Local government councils in Nigeria are involved in community development. They provide infrastructure and social amenities like roads, electricity, markets, water, schools, health centres, women empowerment and skills acquisition centres etc. Therefore, communities only embark on projects and programmes that governments have not provided.

Each local government council has a unit or department with staff charged with the responsibility of coordination of community development project within the local government area. The staff move from one community to another to mobilize or sensitise the people to embark on self-help projects that will improve their standard of living. These officials also monitor projects being executed in the communities and make routine report to the council and state governments. Local government councils also provide technical assistance to communities with on-going self-help projects. On request from communities, local government council can release their machines or equipment to assist communities. Similarly, technical officers may be assigned to give technical advice to communities in their development effort (Imhabekhai, 2009).

Local government councils provide grants to communities to assist or encourage them with on-going projects. For instance, in 2015, Katagum Local Government Council in Bauchi State gave grants of Two Million Naira (N2,000,000:00) to the entire local government council for the

rehabilitation of seventy-one (71) community boreholes; spent Fifty Thousand Naira (N50,000:00) for the training and purchase of equipment to CBOS in order to continue with the rehabilitation of their hand pump / boreholes in their communities (Katagum Local Government, 2015).

#### **PROBLEMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

According to Nwankwo (2002) identified the problems of local government in community development as follows: the local government is not fully effective and responsive in meeting the local citizens' demands with regard to their development; for community problems to be solved, more citizens are yet to be interested in seeking election into local government council; the local government finds it a heavy burden to finance the primary and adult education at the grassroots; and local governments now depend heavily on external sources for their finance. As a result, many do not work hard enough to collect revenue internally; the affiliation among the local, state, and federal governments is yet to be seen as effective for development of any local community; allegation of corruption of the local government level still obtains; and the quality of local government staff still needs to be improved and more frequent and better training is required.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

The paper highlighted that the local government council in the course of pursuing a policy for social change in the rural or local communities, must remember that genuine

Community development is based on the promise that the people are able to realise that they are being helped to develop themselves and their communities. The major role of the local government therefore, revolves around the creation of the awareness or in reawakening in the people the need to actively participate or be involved in the decision making of their own affairs. This is exactly an example of the matching grant approach to community development that provides the meeting point between government and the communities. It is the attempt by government (state or local) to supplement local effort by providing grant-in-aid (technical, financial and managerial) towards the implementation of community projects. (Oduaran, 1994), contended that in using this approach, the people are expected to identify their needs, arrange them in order of priority and work out strategies for meeting them. There after action

is taken, when action is on, the governments then provide its support in form of matching grants.

### Recommendation

Based on the above discussions, the following recommendations were made:

1. The communities in the local governments should be mobilized to initiate, implement and monitor the community development projects and then seek assistance from the local government, state, federal or non-governmental organizations.
2. Rural industrialization should be encouraged so that migration of community members will be minimised and job creation will be maximised.
3. Local Government autonomy should be actualised so that community members will be supported in order to engage more fully in executing different community development projects/activities.
4. The communities in the local governments should be informed of their obligations to initiate community development projects to implement and then call for government assistance whether state or federal.
5. Local government politicians should work hand in hand with career civil servants to make every effort to motivate the worker. This is because without effective human resources management an organization conflict becomes imminent.
6. More self-help or community development projects should be initiated, financed, and executed by local governments to supplement their social services delivery.
7. The state or federal government should be sensitive to the allocation to the local government, thereby enabling it to execute more projects in the communities and also help recruit more qualified and experienced staff mostly needed in the personnel department.
8. The present system of local government, established to serve as a third-tier government, should be allowed by the state government to discharge its legitimate roles geared toward rural transformation.
9. Local governments should design an economic package

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