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Editorial Comment

The edition is two-in-one for the year 2016 and has an array of articles that are as diverse as the field of Public Relations is, this edition is a collector's item with contributions that are real life and applicatory. This is aimed at enhancing public relations practice by both professionals and non-professionals. We look forward to constant contributions of professionals and academics in this journal for the promotion and projection of our cherished discipline.

As expected too, we have included the PRCAN member firms for effective stakeholder communication in this information age and the NIPR 2017 training programme and course outline.

Tyotom Keggku, PhD, FNIPR

Editor-in-Chief

December, 2016

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Government Incapability and Rural Communities Development in Nigeria: Self-Help Project as a Tool for Better Life

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Abstract

Nigerian rural communities are facing problem of development due to the systemic corruption and fluctuation of crude oil (with the mainstay of the country economy) price have made the Nigerian government at all levels unable to develop the rural communities. Consequently, alternative measures need to be adopted since the rural dwellers need better life to live despite government inability to provide such. The said situation motivates rural dwellers to look inward to strategize a means for self-development, which is 'self-help project'. Therefore, through observational and secondary methods of data gathering, the paper examines among others, self-help project as a tool for promotion of better life for rural dwellers, sources of funds and challenges facing it in Nigeria. The study revealed that in the recent times, self-help project by rural dwellers is a prerequisite for survival in the developing countries like Nigeria due to their government inability to provide development in the communities because it (self-help project) is designed to meet the basic needs of the people among others. The paper also revealed that problem of leadership and project identification are some of the challenges encounter by rural dwellers in execution of projects. However, the study equally recommends among others engagement of good leadership and adoption of scale of preference in making choice of project(s) to be embarked on to satisfy the yearn of the people.

Keywords: Government, Development, Rural Community, Self-help project and better life.

Introduction

Community is a group of people living together within defined geographical area. The people in a community wish to live better life in the community they stay. The said desire of life necessitated community to be a basic unit for development.

Globally, in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive, most people live in small communities. Even in the developing big towns, people often group themselves into associations for communal development drive because it has potential to ensure poverty reduction in communities. The rural community efforts toward self-development provide

social and infrastructural services, organized economic activities and community resources management. So, this paper investigates among others self-help project as a tool for promotion of better life in rural communities in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

All over the world, development is a feature of humanity because man needs changes that will improve his condition of life. Community as an administrative unit equally needs to be improved upon to ensure promotion of better life for the people. Therefore, development is inevitable to communities because need invention in their existence.

Development efforts come either from within or outside, and most times the within efforts come when the external is lacking. In Nigeria, rural communities experiencing developmental challenges due to Nigerian government inability to provide socio-economic needs and other infrastructural services in the rural communities. This government inability to development rural areas in Nigeria is as a result of, as noted by Munonye (2015) shortage of funds due to the fluctuation suffered in the recent times from the crude oil sales. Also it has been observed that systemic corruption, poor planning and leadership by successive Nigerian government has caused rural communities underdevelopment. Systemic corruption is a situation in which corruption has become a way of life of a society because it has been institutionalized and raised to the level of a parameter (Okowa in Obi, 2005).

True development can only take place if man indicates desire for development. Since government has failed to meet the developmental yearning of the rural dwellers, the best option for rural communities dwellers are the efforts that

come from within, which is self-help project. Furthermore, government inability necessitated communities to seek avenue(s) to initiate, formulate and execute what they regard as their priorities. Hence, the paper attempt to conceptualize the concept of development, community development, project and examines among others self-help project as a strategy to promote better life for rural communities dwellers as well as to look at the challenges facing self-help project in Nigeria. Primary and secondary methods of data gathering are adopted.

The Objectives of the Study

Nigerian rural communities due to the systemic corruption and unstable price of crude oil in the most recent times which incapacitated the Nigerian government at all levels not to develop the rural communities in Nigeria. In this regard, the paper sets to examine self-help project by rural dwellers as an alternative means to provide their developmental needs for better life in the rural communities. Below are the objectives of the study;

- i To give conceptual understanding of development, community development and project.
- ii To examine self-help project as a tool for promotion of better life for rural dwellers in Nigeria.
- iii To identify sources of funds for self-help projects
- iv To identify problems facing self-help project in Nigeria.
- v To recommends solutions to the identified problems.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Development

The concept of development is problematic as there are many definitions

by various scholars depend on their areas of interest. Development can be referred to as a social change that ushers new innovation into social system to enhance living conditions of people in such system. Adamolekun (2004) views development as a quantitative and qualitative improvement, advancement and progression toward attainment of social, political and economic aspirations.

Also, the former historical president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere (1978) quoted in Omoruyi (2001), said that development can be summed up as "man's capacity to expand his own consciousness and therefore his power over himself, his environment and his society." To him, man is the epicenter around which development revolves. Hence, Nyerere concluded that development is for man by man and of man.

Conclusively, this study sees development as an expansion and increase performance capability of man (or community) to have control of himself, less dependent and more proficiency in what he is doing.

Community Development

The concept, community development has plural definitions. However, Oduaran (1994) noted that the concept, Community development historically was first utilized in 1948 at the Cambridge conference on African Administration organized by the British colonial office and it was regarded as "Mass Education", which was defined as;

a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and if possible, on the initiative of the community, but if this is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its (community) active and

enthusiastic response to the movement.

Therefore, this inquiry views community development as a communal efforts gear toward community self-reliance by harness and exploit both its human and material resources for developmental purposes.

Project

Project can be generally seen as organized activity to be carryout. Project is an endeavour planned with a particular goal which a piece of work organized carefully and designed to achieve a particular aim or plan (oxford advanced learner's dictionary). It is a planned endeavour with a particular objective which can be finish successful in several stages.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

Mobilization and Integrated Strategy Conceptualize for Self-Help Project

In order to realize the active participation and benefits of self-help project as tool for promotion of better life in rural communities in Nigeria, the two concepts –mobilization and integrated as a strategy should be expository explain and adopted. Mobilization is a noun, is formed from a verb word mobilize, which according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary "to become or make somebody or something ready for service or action, or to organize something or somebody for a particular purpose.

Concerning this study, mobilization is a campaign which activates the masses into the process of the need for inward look in order to initiate project(s) for their benefits. It is the process of convincing community members on the objectives and essence of a project(s), which they must remain committed to. In his view on mobilization, Achuen (2015) opined that mobilization is the process of gingering the people up to be part of the process of

change, that the successful participation of the people and the attainment of self-help in the enhancement of the well-being of the people is hanged on effective mobilization.

On the part of integrated and strategy as it applied here, is viewed as two words that go together. Integrated means various parts or aspects linked closely together while strategy means among others, the process of planning or carrying out a plan in skillful way (oxford advanced learner's dictionary). Therefore, integrated strategy as it apply in the study, is a tool for rural development. Rural development that should include and undertake various developmental projects and programmes such as healthcare services, agriculture, education, recreation centres, co-operative schemes, mini-process factories, rural roads, markets, primary and post-primary schools among others for all round benefits for the people.

Emphatically, meeting point of mobilization and integrated strategy toward realization of self-help project as tool for better life of rural dwellers is that the community members must be convinced on the objectives and benefits of the various projects and the need to remain committed to its execution and sustainability. If and when these conceptualized concepts are utilized as guide in execution of self-help project, such project will record success. This theoretical guide promotes total communal development and requires effective coordination of all (both human and material) resources available in the community for the attainment of maximum utility.

Understanding of Self-help Project in Rural Communities Development

Self-help project is one of the important

elements in community development programmes. It is an activity that involves the concerted efforts of the people of a given community aimed at providing some basic amenities in the community. Self-help implies self-reliance which is the end-product of community. Achuenu (2015) articulates that self-help associates with participation because the latter invites the former that is when people participate actively in the management of their own affairs, they are helping themselves.

Moreso, self-help as strategy/tool emphasizes community development as a movement of the people to improved and live better life without any external assistance. Nel et al (1977) opined that self-help is an inward looking approach to self or group improvement which relies solely on own efforts and largely for own benefits.

In summary, self-help is an initiative from within (the rural dwellers) for rural development that has to do with the inducement of change in the rural community for the attainment of an improved welfare for rural dwellers.

The notion of self-help project can further be explain on two principles, the **principle of individual and corporate survival**, and **principle of societal felt need**. The principle of individual and corporate survival motivated by the need for security and corporate co-existence. Here, instinct to survive is not only strong in individuals but equally in the community. This principle arises when societal existence for survival is threatened. On this principle, self-help project is an effort of bringing members of a community together to think and act communally for common good of the individuals and the community in general.

Societal felt need principle is based on the assumption that in every community there are certain needs which are generally recognized and agreed upon by the community members, that these needs create problem(s), so, they call for solutions. For example, insecurity in a community may arise the need to organized vigilante group to police the community.

Emphatically, these principles compel community to pursue self-help project initiatives and moderate them.

Ottong (1997) also identified the following as forces encourage self-help efforts;

- a The questioning of the status quo and the realization that something can possibility be done.
- b An appreciation by the people of their enormous potential resources that could be harnessed to meet felt needs.
- c Exposure to external factors, including education, urban life, the energizing role of migrant indigenous and sons in oversea which help to suppress the debilitation (weak) options.
- d Alienation and neglect experienced by the rural communities.
- e The understanding that resources are naturally scarce and that how they are used needs to be maximized through co-operation.

Self-help project in relation to rural/ community development is a tool for the promotion of rural dwellers participation in the development of their locality, which is based on mutual and joint efforts, communal self-reliance and social responsibility. The essence of community self-help project is to promote better life for the whole members of the community

as a result of the dwindling resources and inability of government to provide for all the needs of the people.

Historical Background of Self-Help Projects in Nigeria

The idea of self-help project in rural community development in Nigeria is as old as Nigeria itself. The idea of self-help project as a strategy for rural development has been traced to the incapacitation of the constituted authority (government) to provide all the necessities of life for the increasing population. Ali (2006) noted that the understanding that government does not have enough resources to provide for all citizens needs, is the driving force towards self-help initiative project which has been successful and has led to the growth of such communities.

Self-help project has been an indigenous mechanism and techniques employed in solving problems by rural communities. Self-help project started in the day of Eastern region in Nigeria as community development. During this period, self-help project was seen as community development strategy as shown by the fact that mutual co-operation existed among families and groups. This community development attitude of the people was encouraged by Chadwick an administrative officer in the former Eastern Nigeria who motivated the communities that gathered in Udi, in Enugu to build schools, roads churches, markets among others.

At Udi in the days of Eastern Nigeria, the people sensitized on community development were shot in a film captioned "Day Break in Udi" by Chadwick. This film was shown around in every village and town of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. The film show brought positive result, which encouraged almost

every community to embarked on forms of self-help project. It was on this occasion that self-help project start in Nigeria (Culled, see Onwuamalelem, 1981 in ArticlesNG, 2015).

Self-help Project as a Promoter of Better Living for Rural Dwellers

Self-help project is designed as a measure for development at the rural level is a prerequisite for survival in the developing countries as the governments have failed to usher development to the people. Self-help by rural dwellers has help them to experience better life as the venture (self-help) brings about socio-economic developmental infrastructures such as construction of rural roads, healthcare centres, primary and post-primary schools, recreation centres and mini-processing factories like garri mill among others.

Self help project better the lives of the rural dwellers because it is a project that;

- i Basically fashioned to meet the core needs of the community.
- ii Encourages self-reliance among the community members, thereby affording the community to utilize their own initiatives and resources in meeting their needs.
- iii Fosters a sense of belonging since every member feels relevance as all are inclusive in the initiation and planning, which help to bring about effective and sustainable development.
- iv Community members are ensure equal accessibility to the use of such project, by so doing distributive justice is maintained.
- v Encourages communities to have equipped vocational training centres to train people in maintenance of community based projects.

Helps to attract government attention if it requires huge capital.

Sources of funds for self-help project

Below are some identified sources of fund for the execution of self help project in rural communities in Nigeria as observed.

- a **Savings:** communities often have general purse in which funds generated by the community from other ventures are kept, such savings are used by such community.
- b **Contribution by the community:** Community members levy themselves toward execution of specific project. At times, members may render labour and contribute materials freely.
- c **Launching:** Community may organize launching to embark on specific project and money realized are used to finance such project.
- d **Donation:** Some individuals may donate money for the execution of self-help project initiated by the community.
- e **Government Assistance:** Sometimes self-help project by a community may attract government financial support for the implementation of such project for the well-being of the people particularly if it requires huge capital e.g construction of schools, bridges etc.

Benefits of self-help project

- i Self-help project is primarily designed to meet the basic needs of the community. Therefore the issue of imposition of project on the people by outsiders does not exist. The following are equally the benefits of self-help project to communities;

- ii Self-help project helps to foster a sense of belonging since every member feels relevance as all are involved in the initiation and planning. This helps to bring about effective and sustainable development as the project is seen as their own.
- iii Self-help project by community members ensure equal accessibility to the use of such project, by so doing distributive justices is maintained.
- iv It provides communities equipped vocational training centres to train people in maintenance of community based projects.
- v Self-help project sometimes help to attract government attention to involve in rural development especially if such project is capital intensive.

Challenges facing self-help project in Nigeria

Self-help project by community is like a pot of soup person intends to cook for entire community, which demands many questions and answers such as which type of soup and how best to prepare it to satisfy all. This scenario requires observation, planning, carefulness and thoroughness to avoid mistakes (problems). Therefore, below are some of the problems facing self-help project in Nigerian rural communities.

- i **Leadership problem:** leadership is a crucial factor in determining the success of a project. At times the leaders are unable to convinced the group/community members about the project's benefits to them in order to motivate and sustained the community interest.
- o **Implementation problem:** Self-Help project often face problem of

implementation since every members cannot all the time have a say in the day-to-day decision-making about the project execution. This situation may cause crisis at the project implementation stage, which might necessitate an immediate solution(s) to arrest the situation particularly by the leader(s).

- ii **Insufficient Fund:** This is also a problem facing self-help project, even at times, there is uncertainty of forthcoming funds for the completion of the project.

- iii **Inadequate/lack of managerial skills:** Managerial and technical skills are required in planning, organizing and executing stage. Without properly trained people in these areas to handle the project professionally, the project might fail.

- iv **Lack/problem of trust:** Sometimes self-help project leaders may be accused of embezzling project funds which may result to lack of co-operation and exit of member(s) that is instrumental to the success of the project, which may affects the completion of the project.

- v **Problem of project identification:** It is often not easy to convinced community members of a particular project benefits to them. Therefore, to identify the need of members and select members' choice of project is very difficult. Egonmwan and Ibodje (1998) noted that this is why it is common to hear villagers or communities complain about certain projects as not "our own".

Conclusion and Recommendations

Self-help project as an alternative to

government failure to rural community development in the recent times is a prerequisite for development of rural communities in the developing countries, which Nigeria is inclusive. The venture (self-help) encourages and motivate rural communities to look inward to harness and exploit their advantages; human and material resources that would have lie dormant and un-utilized, to avoid hunger and low standard of living in communities.

In this regard, the paper recommends solutions to the identified challenges facing self-help project in Nigeria as follows;

- i Community should engaged people with leadership qualities to manage the project and occasional crises that might arise to avoid its abandon. Also, community members should continually seeking for funds from the sources identified in this paper and other possible sources to ensure completion and successful management the project(s).
- ii Some members should be trained on technical and managerial skills if they are lacking in handling the project. Moreso, distrust among members should be discouraged and they should consider the benefits they might lose, if there is no co-operations among them.
- iii The venture is solely for the benefits of the community. Therefore, members' needs must be put in a scale of preference in order to avoid execution of unwanted project(s) which may not satisfy the needs of the people.

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