



Rural Community Development through Participatory Approach: A Case Study of LEEMP, Benue State Nigeria

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Abstract – The study was an appraisal of the Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project (LEEMP) in Benue state. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 225 respondents for the study. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and likert type scale. It was revealed that men constituted majority (72%) of participants. Most (65.6%) respondents were within the age range of 31-50years and 40.8 percent had at least primary education; 76.1 percent were married. The results further revealed that awareness had been sufficiently created about the programme and that people have significantly participated in the programme (≥ 3.0). The results also show that the standard of living of the target communities had improved. It was recommended that citizens need to be involved in every stage of the lifecycle of a project to ensure utilization, sustainability and benefit derivation.

Keywords – Rural, Community, Development, Participatory, LEEMP.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rural community development has been one of the major priority areas of Nigerian government since independence (Agama, 2007). This is with the objective of empowering the rural people politically, socially and economically (Agama, 2007). Consequently, government development policies and programmes have been evolved and targeted at rural transformation. Some of these include operation feed the nation (OFN) in (1971), Agricultural Development Projects (ADP)(1978), Green Revolution in (1979), Directorate for food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure(DFFRI) in (1986) among others. However, these programmes and policies have been pursued without conscious efforts to integrate the rural people in planning and implementation. Thus, a greater percentage of Nigerians were marginalized, ignored and abandoned in the scheme of things affecting the dream of sustainable rural development. As a result most community development programmes in the past were not successful due largely to the approaches which failed to address the actual needs of the target beneficiaries (Federal Project Support Unit, 2006).

The need for community participation in development process emanates from the need to engage the resources, intellect and talents of communities for successful developmental efforts. According to Kiwanuka (1994), unless there is full participation of the rural people in the whole process of rural development, there will not be any sustainable development. Olaley (2004) buttresses this view by saying that because development brings about progressive reduction of material deprivation and social inequalities and also promotes the growth of human

capabilities and potential there is need for full participation of target beneficiaries in the development process. In the opinion of UNDP (1999) participation of rural community members is necessary to build community based organizations, which should serve as vehicles through which the local people could get actively involved. World Bank (2004) also asserts that participatory development process represents a fundamental shift in attitudes and methodologies, thereby breaking the top-down non-participatory practice.

The Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project is a World Bank assisted project designed to establish an institutional mechanism for transferring investment resources to communities in order to enable them finance their own development priorities (LEEMP, 2006). Participating states in Nigeria included: Adamawa, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Enugu, Kastina, Imo, Niger and Oyo states. The project was anchored on community driven approaches to development which require communities to prioritize their development needs through a participatory process. Thus, the objectives of LEEMP are to involve community in planning, co-financing, implementation of development projects and to continue to operate and maintain environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive multi-sectoral micro-projects; strengthen the institutional framework (at federal, state and local government levels) for supporting environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive development projects. In order to ascertain the achievement of these objective, an independent evaluation of the programme *vis a vis* its objectives is imperative. Thus, this study was conducted to: describe the socioeconomic characteristics of LEEMP beneficiaries; determine the level of awareness and participation; determine the impact of LEEMP intervention to target communities.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Benue State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprises of all LEEMP beneficiaries in Benue State. A total of 225 respondents were selected through multi-stage sampling techniques. In stage one, three local government areas were selected from the nine participating local government areas in the state through simple random sampling. Stage two involved the selection of five communities from each of the three local government areas, giving a total of 15 communities. Stage three involved the selection of 2% of the population of the of the communities, giving a total number of 225 respondents as shown in the table below.

Zone	LGA	Targeted Community	Population of Community	Sample Size 2% of Population
A	Tarka	Twar	756	15
		Uyoarako	1021	20
		Salem	503	10
		Anchiha	1018	20
		Konkyar	762	15
B	Katsina-Ala	Aba Mbahav	766	15
		Ushosambe	1021	20
		Achough	516	10
		Virgir	500	10
		Turan	751	15
C	Apa	Alifeti	767	15
		Akpete	753	15
		Oladoga	761	15
		Auke	773	15
		Oiji-Jos	755	15
		Total		225

Primary data was used for the study which was garnered through a well structured questionnaire and interview sections with LEEMP beneficiaries. The socioeconomic characteristics of respondents were analyzed descriptively, impact of LEEMP on target communities were presented in a tabular form, while five point likert type scales was used to analyze the awareness and participation level respectively as follows;

Awareness level: Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they were aware of the program viz: high, moderate and low. The degree of agreement with high, moderate and low was measured on a 5- point likert type scale as follows: (a) Strongly agree (SA) =5, Agree (A) = 4, Disagree (D) = 3, Strongly disagree (SD) =2; undecided (UD) =1. The values was added and divided by 5 to get the mean score of 3.05 therefore 3.05 were regarded as the cutoff point. The mean scores of 3.05 and above were regarded as positive while means of 2.95 and below were regarded as negative responses.

Participation: The respondents were asked to indicate their typology of participation in decision making, planning, execution and evaluation using a five indent point format as follows: To a great extent (TGE)=5, To some extent(TSE)=4, To a little extent(TLE)=3, To a very little extent (TVLE)=2, No extent(NE)=1. The values of the scale was added to get 15 which was further divided by 5 to obtain a mean score of 3.The cut-off point for the mean was determined by adding the interval of 0.05 to the mean. The upper limit of the cut-off point becomes 3.05. The lower limit of the cut-off point was determined by subtracting the interval scale of 0.05 from the mean to obtain 2.95. Respondents mean scores was obtained for each response item such statements with mean scores of 3.05 and above was regarded as positive while 2.95 and below was regarded as negative.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the study are as presented below;

Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents

The results in Table 1 shows that 72.9 percent of the respondents were males and the other 28 percent were females. Large proportions of the respondents (65.6%) were within the age bracket of 31-50 and were mainly farmers (62%). Majority of the respondents (61% above) were educated which shows that the people in the study area are quite young and expected to be productive. The finding in this study agrees with that of Nwachukwu and Ezeh (2007) who reported that people within this age group formed the bulk of the productive work force. The relatively youthful age composition of the people in the study area suggests a high tendency for dynamism and innovativeness and 76% of the respondents were married, with about 56% having a household size of 8-10 persons per household.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency	%
Sex		
Male	163	72.9
Female	62	27.9
Total	225	100.0
Age		
20-29	29	13.1
30-39	93	41.9
40-49	97	43.7
50-59	6	1.4
Total	225	100.00
Sex		
Male	160	72.1
Female	62	27.9
Total	222	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	52	23.4
Married	169	76.1
Divorced	4	.5
Total	225	100.00
Occupation		
Farming	108	48.6
Civil servant	69	31.1
Self employed	43	19.4
Others	5	.9
Total	225	100%
Educational Attainment		
Non-formal education	19	7.2
Primary	61	27.5
Secondary	73	32.9
Tertiary	72	32.4
Total	225	100%
Household Size		
2-4	8	23.1
5-7	48	21.6
8-10	84	38.0
11 above	39	17.3
Total	225	100%
Social Organization		
0	14	6.3
1-2	125	56.3

3-4	36	16.2
5 and above	47	21.2
Total	225	100%

Awareness level of LEEMP projects by respondents in target communities.

Results in Table 2 indicate that respondents were highly aware of the LEEMP activities in their community as the mean perception of awareness levels were significantly greater than the benchmark (≥ 3.05) for awareness of the LEEMP activities in their communities; consultative meetings in their communities with officials of LEEMP at the beginning of the project; regular meeting with all stakeholders, and awareness of the money given by LEEMP to their communities. The favorable opinion of the beneficiaries was a good evidence to show that there was a lot of sensitization, publicity and awareness creation on the LEEMP activities in the target communities. This is corroborated by the findings of Anyanwu (1999), that awareness is a determinant of citizen's participation, especially by the project initiators, if the project is not identified by the people. The result also agrees with that of Nwachukwu and Ezeh (2007) who reported high awareness level of the respondents in their work on impact of selected rural development programs on poverty alleviation in Ekwano LGA, Abia State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Respondents Level of Awareness

Awareness	Mean	Standard Deviation
Awareness of LEEMP activities in your community	4.81	0.466
Involvement of community members in the choice of project.	4.80	0.475
Consultation of officials of LEEMP with members of the Community.	4.68	0.700
Regular stakeholder meetings	4.45	0.834
Awareness of the money given by LEEMP to community	4.71	0.607

≥ 3.05 = Agreed = 2.95 = Disagreed * Strongly agreed: high level of awareness

Respondents Level of participation in LEEMP Activities

It is evident from Table 3 that with regards to the levels of participation of beneficiaries in LEEMP programme, the respondents in target communities strongly agreed with positive responses of participation in various aspects of the project to a great extent with mean responses being significantly high (≥ 3.05). The respondents strongly agreed that they were involved in needs identification; writing of community development plan; designing of micro projects; costing of micro projects; implementation

of the projects; contribution of money towards the counterpart for LEEMP projects; seeking external support for the project; contribution of food for workers on site; donation of land towards the project; attendance to review meeting; were able to say what they needed; procurement of tools and materials; keeping records of all income and expenditure; launching and publicity arrangement.

It is apparent that the majority of the respondents participated in LEEMP programme to some extent. This finding is in line with the explanation of Pearce (1988), which maintained that mobilization through effective integration of human, and natural resources and participation within the rural community take various forms and generally institutionalized into the socio-economic practice of the society. Paul (1986) stated that community participation is a process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receiving a share of the project benefits. Osuji (2004) indicated that citizen participation in terms of development as the engagement of project community members in decision-making processes, planning of developmental programmes in their areas. This is also supported by the findings of Anyanwu (1991) who reported that participation implies that the workers have to supply the necessary and needed stimulus needed for the project's success.

Table 3: Respondents Participation in LEEMP Project.

Types and levels of participation	Mean	SD
Need Identification	4.45*	8.53
Writing of Community Development Plan.	3.96*	1.297
Designing of micro project	3.96*	1.280
Costing of micro projects	3.93*	1.198
Implementation of LEEMP project	4.18*	1.047
Contribution of money toward counterpart funding for LEEMP projects	4.33*	1.038
Seeking external support	3.97*	1.181
Contribution of food for workers on site	4.36*	.973
Land for the project	3.33*	1.547
Attendance for review meetings	3.88*	1.278
Community perception of need	4.40*	.849
Procurement of tools and materials	3.79*	1.424
Recording of income and expenditure	3.69*	1.374
Launching and publicity arrangements	3.67*	1.344

≥ 3.05 = significant; 2.95 not significant * significant* high level of participation

Impact of LEEMP on Target Communities

The impact of LEEMP on target communities in the study area are as summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4: impact of LEEMP on target communities in the study area

Community	Sector	Existing Projects Before LEEMP	Es tablished Projects During LEEMP Intervention
Alifeti (Apa LGA)	Education	None	2 units of 3 classroom blocks with VIP toilets and 150 dual desks.
Akpete (Apa LGA)	Transport	None	3 classrooms block with VIP toilets and 75 dual desks.
Akpete(Apa LGA)	Transport	Log of wood kept across the stream.	One double box culvert across Ogbago stream
Akpete(Apa LGA)	Transport	None	One ring culvert (relieve culvert) near Ogbago stream.
Oladoga (Apa LGA)	Education	None	3 class blocks with VIP toilets and 75 dual desks.
Oladoga (Apa LGA)	Transport	None	Construction of 3.5 km Oyi-Oladoga road with 4 culverts.
Auke (Apa LGA)	Health	None	- Health Clinic - Staff Quarters - Incinerator
Auke (Apa LGA)	Water	Stream	One hand pump borehole.
Oiji-Jos (Apa LGA)	Transport	Logs of wood across the stream	Construction of 2 span bridge.
Oiji-Jos (Apa LGA)	“	None	One double box culvert (relief)
Tsoho-Usarube Kastina-Ala LGA	Education	Mud classroom block.	3 classroom block with an office.
Virgir Kastina-Ala LGA	“	Dilapidated classroom block	1 No 3 classroom block with furniture. - Rehabilitation of 3 classroom blocks.
“	Health	None	- Health clinic with staff quarters - Furniture in the clinic - Incinerators.
Aba-Mbaha Kastina-Ala LGA	Education	None	1 No 3 classroom blocks with office VIP toilets furniture.
“	Health	None	- Health clinic with staff quarters. - Incinerator
“	Water	Stream	- Borehole
Achough Kastina-Ala LGA	Health	None	- Health clinic - Staff quarters - Incinerator.
“	Transport	None	2 No bore culvert
Turan Kastina-Ala LGA	Health	None	Health clinic with staff quarters and incinerator.
“	Social	None	Police post.
Auduha (Tarka LGA)	Health	None	Health clinic, incinerator, staff quarters.
“	Education	One block classroom	3 – classroom block
“	Water	None	Borehole.
Salem (Tarka LGA)	Health	Dilapidated building	Maternity clinic.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study has established that awareness creation of a program is a determinant of individual’s participation especially by the project’s initiators. LEEMP used a strategy that enables community members to participate and established projects that were prioritized by themselves which lead to national and community development, contributing greatly to improvement in the standard of living of the targeted rural communities. The study also established that there is development of human and material resources, which enhances the living standard of

the people. This implies that LEEMP community driven development is a method that enables projects to be built around the felt-needs of the people through the citizen’s mobilization of both human and material resources within themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the phase II of the LEEMP in Nigeria is recommended. However, before the commencement, the enabling environment should be



created. In line with this, the following recommendations is made;

1. For every government programme targeted at community development, there is need to embark on intensive awareness creation of the existence of the programme through the use of the staff, town criers, village meetings, radio and televisions jingles in local dialect.
2. Policy makers should de-emphasize top-down flow of information. This approach has the great disadvantage of reducing interaction between policy makers and the rural dwellers as well as participation. Community Driven Development Approach (CDD) should rather be used as this medium offers the rural people the opportunity to actively involve in the entire process of conception, identification, and execution of any poverty alleviation programme that will benefit them.
3. Due to the high illiteracy level in rural areas there is a need for capacity building of the people and especially the vulnerable group to enable them participates more in similar rural development project.
4. An effective monitoring and evaluation team should be established so that the management can keep beneficiaries informed of the policies and plans affecting them and communities members can react promptly with their views about management's proposals and actions change may be managed properly with an understanding of the feelings of those affected by it, and an efficient system of communication is needed to understand and influence these feelings.

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