

Community Challenges and MDGs Target in Developing Economy: Nigerian Experience

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Abstract

Community, being an Organization of Social life within a limited area, based possibly, on common life and which also exist for good life, has the influence of filial relationship and the identity of homogeneity. As a member of United Nations and a signatory to the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Nigeria has participated in all the eight goals of MDGs. Though all the eight goals have been implemented, yet many Nigerians, especially the rural dwellers, have not been aware of these goals. These have been skeptical in the belief of the people as the real effect or impacts of these goals to the people, especially, the core poor. Goal one which borders on poverty reduction could not reach the grassroots neither did other goals touch their lives appropriately. These pose grate challenges to the authorities and government agents responsible for MDGs implementations. This paper, examines the administrative challenges faced by the community leadership in actualizing the MDGs targets in Nigeria. Also the paper is aimed at evaluating the roles of participants and the stake holders on MDGs implementations which overtly or covertly were eroded in course of carrying out these goals. In the context of our discussion, the methods applied in paper are historical and empirical. Historical research is the critical investigation of event, developments and experiences of the past. The empirical evidence based on practical investigation of facts and observations was equally examined. In the findings, it was discovered that the rural dwellers did not lack of adequate communication and ignorance among other fact inherent therein.

Keywords; Community Challenges, MDGs, Developing Economy, Structural functionalism.

1.0 Introduction

Community, being the oldest institution orchestrated by man is being used as the main instrument of development. Man developed the idea of coming together based on the understanding and filial relationship within his area. This affinity could be biological, cultural, ideological and or identical relationship. It could be as a result of common destiny as in case of traditional Osu or Oru cast system. Community or town, traditionally, is as area that is relatively known with homogenous cultural affinity, having a common destiny of traditional institution of rulership known as Igwe/Obi, Oba, Emir, etc. Community or Town is on age-long primordial institution with overwhelming socio-cultural and political influence and authority. The existence of communities made the administration of the area less cumbersome for the colonial masters who saw the community as unity of command..

In explaining community Chaturvedi (2006), sees Community as an Organization of Social life within a limited area, based possibly, on common life and that exist for good life. In his own explanation, Hugo (1978) views community, as a subgroup of people occupying a territory, less-sufficient than a society, with closer association, and deeper sympathy. However community could be the urban or rural community. A rural community is relatively known for its serene environment with homogeneous cultural affinity and devoid of noise and environmental Pollution (Oyaide, 2005). Such rural communities lack the luxuries of modern technology, the rapid movement of vehicles and environmental pollution. While urban communities have the paraphernalia of hustling and bustling activities and noise environment, with heterogeneous people, full of vehicles, commercial activities, industries and of course with the associated pollution, the rural community is known for its serenity and pristine environment devoid of deafening noise, rapid and hustling movement of motorable roads, etc. Urban communities are areas with full of life with positivity of those activities that rural communities are devoid of.

For a community to be harmonious, peaceful, united and progressive, it must be well organized with effective and efficient administration (i.e. good governance).Community has been the conduit pipe where government/non-governmental programmes are channeled. It could be institutional, such as United Nations or even development partners like UNDP. For the purpose of this paper we are looking at the United Nations' MDGs

1.1 Statement of Problem

Nigeria, being a member of United Nations, is a signatory to the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs have implemented eight goals, yet many Nigerians, especially the rural dwellers, have not been

aware of these goals. These have been skeptical in the belief of the people as to the real effect or impacts of these goals to the people, especially, the core poor. Goal one which borders on poverty reduction could not reach the grassroots neither other goals touch their lives appropriately. These pose great challenges to the authorities and government agents responsible for MDGs implementations. The roles of the communities, individuals and beneficiaries, the leadership and the government/its agents are the problems which this paper hopes to address. This paper, therefore, examines generally, the administrative challenges faced by the community leadership in actualizing the MDGs targets in Nigeria. The objective of this paper is also aimed at evaluating the roles of participants and the stake holders on MDGs implementations which overtly or covertly were eroded in course of carrying out these goals. In the context of our discussion, our focus is on the efforts, cooperation and harmony involve in a more unified interest group called Community. And these communities are the ones in South Eastern Nigeria.

2.0 Theoretical framework

For the purpose of this paper, structural functionalism is the theoretical discourse (frame work) we applied. Structural-functionalism is a tradition of social analysis that sees society as a mosaic of functions and structures that perform them. For example, in order to survive, a society needs to reduce poverty, educate its children, produce goods, govern its affairs and provide security for its members. These are functions and they necessitate a number of structures such as institutions/agents, industries, parliaments, and so on. In Nigeria, for instance, the 'shared interests' among the diverse and conflicting groups in the nation, are the nucleus for survival. Structuralism, is similar to transformative theory which, addresses the reactions of individuals, groups, cultures, institutions and societies to change. It is the ability of functional and effective leadership that direct the affairs in organized system in which the people could react positively to issues that affect them. Functionalism presents a view of social world as essentially harmonious and stable for progressive change. According to Preston (1996), Persons use functional theory of action to analyze society and other general social system that comprises a set of subsystems that deals with various social sciences such as economics, sociology, politics and psychology. Prebendalism and even clientele loyalties are subjective functionalism. In applying functionalism to this work, the interactive activities of the government, the community leaders and among the led themselves could help in poverty reduction and reactionary positive change in the community. The structural system is such that make people react to exigencies within them and for the purposes of co-existence. The people's reaction to innovation depends on how interactive/adaptive they react to a process they are made to be part of. Here, structuralism and transformative ideology based on functional interactive methodology is ideal theoretical discourse.

3.0 Methodology

Historical and empirical methods were applied in gathering our data. According to Kerlinger (1977), historical research is the critical investigation of event, developments and experiences of the past. The empirical evidence based on practical investigation of facts and observations were equally examined. Descriptive analytical methods were applied in analyzing data collected. We objectively drew our analyses from our close observation and from our non participatory observations, our interactive engagement, especially, from interviews and visitations.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

4.1 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The series of conferences in 1990 organized by the United Nations were aimed at addressing the long-term, difficult problems like poverty and environmental degradation on top of the global agenda (UNC, 2000). Abject poverty was growing rapidly in sharp contrast to a world of huge material abundance. As a response to the challenge of eradicating extreme poverty, the Millennium Development Goals were introduced based on the various agreements and resolutions of world organizations in the last decade which provided the basis for more effective global partnership for development (Wikipedia, 2010).

It is within the foregoing context that the world's ever largest gathering of 189 member countries of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration in September 2000 in New York, United States of America, by declaring as follows: "we will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected to" (Oladunni, 2004) the set of targets to be achieved as embodied in the Millennium Goals' declaration are:

Goal I: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger; this aims at reducing by half between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1 a day; and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. Goal II: Achieve Universal Primary Education, through ensuring that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Goal III: Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education not later than 2015.

Goal IV: Reducing child mortality rate by between 1990 and 2015, i.e the under five mortality rate.

Goal V: Reducing by three-quarters, the maternal mortality ratio between 1990 and 2015.

Goal VI: Reducing by half the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, by 2015 thereby reversing the spread.

Goal VII: Integrating the principles of sustainable environmental development into member country's policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources i.e

- Half the proportion of people without sustainable access to drinking water by 2015.

- Achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

Goal VIII: Develop Global Partnership for Development. This aims at having a target among others, the development of an open, rule-based predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system (Wikipedia, 2010).

The MDGs are measurable, time-bound and can be monitored. The first seven goals are aimed at reducing poverty in all its ramifications while the last-global partnership for development-specifies the means to achieve the first seven. The achievement of the goals is predicated on massive inflow of foreign aid, most especially from the G7 countries.

Nigeria, as a United Nations member, is a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), thereby making the nation a part of the world league of poverty-fighters and a compliant to all the eight targeted goals of the MDGs.

Community Development: Maxwell (2004), in explaining development maintains that the success of development depends on;

- a. The attitude of the people towards projects
- b. The people's commitment to the projects
- c. The people's character (integrity) towards the projects
- d. The standard for people i.e. the expectation of the people towards their living condition and
- e. The influence over the people i.e. leadership.

He further states that for development to be successful, 'the leadership must have made the right assumption about the projects and the area; asked the right questions about the project and the area, given the right assistance to the people' (Maxwell, 2004. 115). Community development therefore, is the improvement/advancement of a group of people living in an entity or in an area with homogenous identity as stated above.

Basic Principles of Community Development

a. The Principles of Self-help: Self-help is the main goal of community development. This principle highlights community development as a movement of the people. It evolves the aspirations of the people themselves, that their improvement will come about. Self-help enables the local people to exploit to their advantage, the resources which would, otherwise, lie dormant, and thereby perpetuate the ignorance and poverty of their community.

b. The Principles of Felt-Need: The principle of felt-need stresses that people must be able to identify what they want to do in order to achieve their desired development. The identification is only possible if the people are able to identify what stands in their way to progress and are able to do something to remove it. The idea of need in the community arises from the lack of something which, in the opinion of some people, would facilitate the improvement of the welfare of the community if it had been present or available.

c. The Principle of Citizen Participation: The Principle of citizen participation is deeply inherent in very concept of community development. The concept demands that whatever is done to improve the welfare of a people must endeavour to elicit the enthusiasm and whole-hearted participation of such a people. The central idea is that in community development, success is assured where the efforts of a local community is supplemented or aroused by the direction or cooperation of governmental authorities. It shows community development in its true light as a cooperation of partnership in progress.

The principles of citizen participation demands that the local people should take part in the planning execution, utilization and assessment of the social amenities or facilities designed to improve their welfare.

d. The Principle of Self-Growth: This principle demands that a community does not have to accept or even to wait to have ready-made solutions to its problems-which are worked out by outsiders who have no connections with the community. The community has to be able, through constant practice, to analyze its own problems, and initiate action towards finding solutions to such problems.

e. The Principle of Self-Reliance; The principle of self-reliance promotes self-growth. It emphasizes the need for people to take their destiny in their own hands. The principle is fast growing in acceptability as a new strategy for community development in developing societies.

The role of the Traditional Ruler and the Cabinet in the Community; Traditional rulers are statutorily empowered in Nigeria. In Nigeria, the traditional rulers' laws have been in existence since early '60s. For instance, the Eastern Nigeria law of 1963 Caps 21 gave the traditional ruler relevance in the administration of the

communities. Also the 1976 local government reform gave the traditional rulers strong responsibility in the administration of their communities. The Anambra state Edit No. 8 of 1976 and that of Edit No. 10 and 14 of 1978 and 81 respectively address the issues and duties of both the traditional rulers, including their appointments based on the people's selection/election and the duties/roles of communities/towns. The subsequent amendment of the Edith in 1986 and 1989 still gave the tradition rulers and the communities very clear \and specified duties of the traditional rulers in their communities. The Enugu State amendment Edith of 2001 specifies the selective/election, appointment and duties of traditional rulers and their community leaders. Prior to 2001, the old Anambra state local government Edit 1989 mandated every community/town to establish community association known as 'Development Committee'. In other words, every community was mandated to form a committee out of the community, and this would be called Development Committee. These towns/communities development committees have specified duties and responsibilities. In fact, in Enugu State, the Chairman/President of the Town Union (a k a. Community Development Committee) is the de-facto leadership of the community where there is no traditional ruler. In other words, the town union/community development committees chairman is the leader of the community if such community has no traditional ruler (i.e. Igwe).

- However, the duties of the tradition rulers/community leaders include the following:
- Maintenance of law and order in the community.
- Settlement of disputes among the people within the community.
- The traditional ruler and his cabinet members act as the custodian of the culture, customs and in most cases advise the community on such matters.
- Encouragement and stimulation of development projects in the town/community.
- Promotion of peace and stability in the community. etc

Effective project management takes place if such project is well planned and well coordinated. In other words, the project should be strategically planned and coordinated. Hence, according to hill and zones (2004), strategic management process is a process by which managers choose a set of strategies for a company that will allow it to achieve superior performance. Such ideas, means and processes that could lead to maximum goal achievement should be adopted. They state further that for a good project management to take place there should be proper cooperation and coordination. The integration of a group of people with a common interest and desired goals is a vital instrument and focal point in strategic planning on any project initiative, execution and management. According to Koontz, cannice and weihrich (2008), coordination is accurate instrument employed so as to achieve harmony among individuals in project management. Koontz and co see coordination as the main instrument being employed to achieve cooperative relationship in project management.

According to Obi (2008), strategic planning and good investment decisions are good weapon, for positive result in project management. Strategic planning and good investment decision involve making a choice out of alternatives. In other words, opinions are sought for and weighed for better alternatives. Invariably, there must be harmony among interested parties so as to choose the best or rather the better alternatives.

4.2 Challenges of Project Management - Government Challenges

Local governments lack solid financial base to manage effectively their project. As Ogunna (in Agu 2008), correctly noted, revenue collection is uncertain and haphazard in most local governments. The experiences is that only those items whose collection are more or less automatic. i.e. those whose payers have a strong incentive to pay or are otherwise obliged to pay, get collected anywhere near the estimates. Most rural areas are in deplorable state of poverty with the result that there is absence of reasonable tenements worthy of valuation and rating. Some internal revenue sources of local governments are generally poor, unrealistic and difficult to collect. Sometimes, the expenditure to be incurred in collecting revenue from a particular revenue source would far exceed the expected proceeds from that revenue sources. There is a high incidence of corruption, fraud and embezzlement among revenue sources. There level of rate evasion is notoriously high. Some state governments "high jack" federal government allocations (in addition refusing to pay theirs) which pass through tem thereby starving local governments of funds, etc. all these have resulted in poor finance and have consequently affected adversely project management at local government level. This is because lack of fund has prevented local government from acquiring high quality personnel and materials for effective projective project management. In fact, you cannot mange a project successfully without fund.

- **Lack of Proper Information:** One of the major constraints of project management at local government level is that those responsible do not always possess adequate knowledge of the total environment in which their local government operates. A good gasp of the totality of the environment of the local government area by project of officers is an indispensable requirement for not only sitting of a project but also in its execution and management. In some local governments, vital records about important projects are very scanty, ill-kept and haphazard. In some cases, they are misplaced and sometimes lost. One finds in some cases very conflicting figures of the same project contained in different files. This is very serious. Where proper and systematic records maintenance is lacking, it would be difficult for local government project

officers to execute as well as manage any project effectively.

- **Lack of consultation with the community leaders on project management:** Local Government exists to serve the interest of local communities, and sitting of project in their areas is a practical demonstration techniques employed to serve their interests. It, therefore, follows that local communities and they should be involved in management of projects located in their communities should be involved in management of projects located in their communities. But regrettably, aloofness and Communication gap exist between the inhabitants and Local Government project officials. Sometimes, projects sited in a particular locality are at variance with the priorities of the people, as they are not involved; and it results in vandalism. Once the community is not involved, they will contribute directly or indirectly to the failure of such a project; but if they are fully involved, they will see it as their duty to bring about the success of such project.
- **Personal Interest of Government Officials:** Project managers are not gods or angels but human beings. Thus, they are often influenced by their own values, likes, prejudices, attitudes and norms. This situation results in the project officer responding to his own personal values and attitude. Sometime, when availed, data and information show clearly the best and appropriate way to manage a project, the project officer disregards this and makes the choice based on personal values. This affects adversely project management at local government level. Human element in project management can only be minimized by in-built system of periodic project management reviews
- **Adoption of Advanced Techniques:** Another problem of effective and efficient project management is the “wholesale importation” of technique used by developed countries. Hence, Ogunhamers in Agu (2008) states the following as to why project fails in Nigeria;
 - The paucity of resources directly related to Nigerian situation and environment
 - A heavy reliance on the so-called foreign experts; and
 - Failure to involve the grassroots people in planning and managing the project affecting them.

We should not adopt a management technique simply because it worked well in advanced countries. This type of sudden adoption explains why such projects like mass transits, community bank, etc. have not functioned effectively in most of our local government Area.

- **Political Instability:** Frequent changes of baton at Local Governments have negative effect on project management as each administration will like to initiate its own projects instead of completing the existing ones. It has become the norm of most administrations not to spend meaningfully in managing a project it inherited. In fact, most administrations will like the projects of the predecessor to collapse so that the incumbent can use it as a campaign strategy.

Specific Community challenges

- ❖ Lack of fund- One of the greatest problems facing the community is raising the counterpart fund. In most cases, raising the fund stalls such project.
- ❖ Lack of understanding and total unity among the leadership- The leaders, sometimes fail to reach consensus on such vital issues as regards project citing. As such, making them to fully participate in managing such project becomes a near impossible.
- ❖ Self interest- Self interest syndrome kills the management of most projects within the community. People only trust their own relations and when the management of such project is not being handled by their own person, then their cooperation becomes problematic.

Corruption- Another problem is corruption of the leadership. Sometimes the community fund could not be properly accounted for or even outright embezzlement of the contributed fund. This hampers most of the projects management in the community as the people simply feel disgusted on raising fund or trusting the same of group of leadership.

Other challenges are:

Collaboration: The collaboration strategy connotes the process of understanding and agreement on community programmes based on communality of citizen’s interest, devoid of stringent opposition. In the praxis of collaboration strategy, the community members are encouraged to cooperate among themselves for the promotion and implementation of commonly agreed community projects that are beneficial to all.

- 1) **Campaign Strategy:** this method is mostly sued in communities where there exists modicum of misunderstanding in value orientations and interests. In this scenario, pressures are needed to be mounted on the people to among themselves, while the principles of community compromises and negotiation are marketed to the different groups, before development programes are embarked upon.
- 2) **Competitive Strategy:** The use of competition as one of the strategies of sustainable community mobilization and development are organized around the use of government grant in aids to ginger and mobilize the community members.
- 3) **Workshops, Seminars and Conferences & Training:** This approach has recently been utilized to increase the knowledge context and content of community member and leaders in the practice of latest community

development techniques in use.

- ✓ **Local Governments:** The local governments as bedrock of grassroot governance are properly suited for motivating and energizing community members for self-reliance programmes. As the principles behind the creation of local governments in Nigeria stipulates:

Non-Governmental Organization: The non-governmental Organization agents in community development mobilization, consists of associations and group as Town Development Unions, Social Clubs, Cooperative Association, Women and Youth Organization, Professional Organizations like Nigerian Medical Associations, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Christian churches and Islamic/Moslem groups etc. these community based non-governmental organizations are veritable agents of community development mobilization.

Non-Formal Organization: These are groups, that strictly lack elements of formality but are very influential in community socio-Political lives of the people. The outlay of these type of groups include others as the “**Umuada**” associations, the market women associations, the Community student Union Associations, the village kinship elders associations etc. in Nigeria, these non-formal Organizations have been found to be very useful in mobilizing for community development.

The Principle of Self: Direction: This principle emphasizes that individuals and communities have the capacity to motivate there selves internally to carry out activities in their own initiative to achieve positive results for personal and community development.

Community Participation and Community Mobilization Strategies

Though community participation has seen identified by development experts and agencies as an indispensable factor for the success of development efforts, a variety of meanings and interpretations are attached to the term. Nevertheless, its more or less common central idea in relation to development is the involvement of members of project communities in all stages of decision-making relating to development programmes in their areas. What this means is that development programmes and projects should not be imposed on the people who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of development efforts. Beneficiary villages should not be made passive receipts of services; rather they should take pun, in all the activities concerned with development of their areas. Their involvement should include.

- Taking part in decision making to identify fell community needs and them list them in order of priority.
- Taking part in the mobilization of resources and planning projects to be undertaken in accordance with the identified/needs in their order to priority.
- Taking part in the activities to implement an put the projects in place and
- Taking part in the monitoring and evaluation of the projects

Villager's Participation in Development could be expressed in the Following Ways:

- Having knowledge of local issues
- Attendance of public meetings.
- Related attempts to influence proposed measures through individuals or group actions.
- Belonging to groups and committees.
- Labour and financial contributions towards community projects.

5.0 Recommendations/conclusion

The following recommendations are necessary in effective project management at the local government and the community;

- The local government officials should ensure that only highly qualified and technical experts are engaged for project management. The idea whereby Local Government employs any “nyophant” to manage a project is wrong and should not be encouraged.
- There is need for adequate provision of fund. No project can be well managed without find. Finance is the life-wire of any project, so, determines its success of failure.
- There is need to involve fully the people at the grassroots. The people at the grassroots should be allowed to contribute significantly in determining their needs and identifying their projects should not be imposed on the communities; rather, projects should be generated from them.
- There is the need to resist Nigeria factor on fund mismanagement; inflation of contracts; frequent changes in political leadership; politicization of contracts; wrong fitting of projects due to favouritism and tribalism; employment of incompetent hands (due to sectionalism); inter-and intra-communal conflict; vandalization; bribery and corruption etc, among the people , within the community at the local government.

The government cooperation alone will not solve these problems, there is need for full involvement of communalities in project management and the cooperation of the people is very vital in project management. Government/Community cooperation on project management could be the main antidote for conflict aggravation and a special means of resolving conflict in the society.

Community involvement in project management at the local government level will promote better understanding and co-operation between the people and the local government. Also the involvement of the communities will help in overseeing the activities of the local government in their areas. Projects concerning them should be made known to them by the state government and or the local government should communicate to them of the projects they want to embark on in the area. Every community should be involved in the management of the projects located in its area.

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