

An Assessment of Government Initiatives in Community Development Programmes in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Pere-ere Felix victor^{1*} Erekpokeme Lucia Nemine²

1. Department of Educational Foundations, Niger Delta university, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.
2. Department of Agricultural Education, Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education Sagbama, Bayelsa state, Nigeria.

Abstract

The research was an assessment of government initiatives in community development programmes in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Emphasis was on Government Programmes and the impact of these programmes and projects on members of the various communities in relation to how the programmes and projects have improved their living conditions, thus actualizing their real purposes. The assessment was carried out with a sample of 400 adults in the Local Government Area. Questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. Data was analyzed using percentages and chi-square statistics. The study revealed that people are aware of government programmes/projects but are not involved in the process of initiating, planning and implementation of them. It was recommended that government should develop effective strategies that would match the principle of community development especially at the grassroots, avoid the execution of projects that are not the felt-need of the people to foster sustainability and ensure the practice of checks and balances at the local and state levels to monitor funds earmarked for community development programmes/projects.

Keywords: Assessment, government initiatives, community development programmes

1. Introduction

The problem of developing rural communities is now a major concern in the development planning of developing countries. Anyanwu (1992) describes community development as a process in the life of a community by which the people plan and act together for the satisfaction of their felt-need, to bring about improvements in the life of the people through changes in the conditions of the community. For any economy to improve, the citizens have to participate effectively in the social, economic and political spheres of their economy. The popularity of community development (CD) as a major premise for the improvement of national life is based on the fact that people can by deliberate intent, through study and action, overcome limiting circumstances of life like poverty, ignorance and disease.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has for long embarked on various (CD) programmes and projects in the Niger Delta region which is home to Yenagoa Local Government Area (LGA). This dates back to 1958 when recommendation from the Sir Henry Willinks Commission was submitted, giving birth to programmes like the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1960 and the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) 1993. The Niger Delta Development Commission was established in 2001 under the NDDC Act of 2000 by the Federal Government. This was to offer a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta region. NDDC intends to facilitate rapid and even sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful. (NDDC in Bayelsa State, 2005.)

Presently, the Nigerian economy is struggling to leverage her vast wealth in fossil fuel in order to displace the crushing poverty that affects about 57 percent of its population. Excluding the energy sector, the Nigerian economy is highly inefficient. Human capital is underdeveloped as Nigeria ranked 151 out of countries in the United Nations Development index in 2004 (Wikipedia Free encyclopedia, 2015). The task of awakening and developing people in the rural areas is now a major concern for developing countries (Anyanwu, 1992).

In Nigeria, government policy which aims at integrating rural populations is achieved through community development as well as the satisfaction of basic human needs of rural people and raising of their living conditions to an acceptable standard. In order for the people to function significantly as self-reliant, community development is therefore a fundamental requirement. Right from independence, the Nigerian government has embarked on various programmes, projects and other community development activities in order to improve her economy especially, the Niger Delta region which is home to Yenagoa Local Government Area (The capitol magazine, 2007).

In attempting to improve the economy, the Federal Government embarked on various National programmes and projects. Several programmes were set up in Nigeria over the years with the mandate of improving the economy and the alleviation of poverty in the country. These include the Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural

Infrastructure (DFRRI), the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), River Basin Development Authorities etc.

Presently, some of these programmes have phased out while others are yet to accomplish their goals.

From the above listed programmes, there is no doubt that funds are being budgeted and spent by the Federal Government to successfully realize the goals and objectives of these programmes, projects and agencies. It therefore becomes relevant to evaluate these efforts by assessing these agencies, their programmes and projects and how far it has realized its goals and objectives in the lives of the people especially in Yenagoa Local Government Area. The general objective of the study is to identify existing government agencies and programmes in the Local Government Area, their various contributions and effects on the lives of the people. Specifically, the study aims to:

- (1) Identify efforts made by the government to foster sustainable development of the people thereby eradicating every misinformation, disinformation and ignorance;
- (2) Evaluate how far the government has gone in seeing to the effective realization of sustainable development;
- (3) Identify government strategy/approach in realizing sustainable development.

In addition, the study investigated the following null hypothesis:

HO1: There is no significant difference between those who are aware and those who are unaware about government contributions through various projects and programmes.

HO2: There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that the government has made an impact in the lives of the people via these programmes and projects.

HO3: There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that governments' intention for full development of the people is genuine.

1.1 Methodology

The area of this study is Yenagoa Local Government Area. It is located in Bayelsa state in the southern part of Nigeria which forms part of the Niger Delta region. It comprises 45 villages excluding the capital, Yenagoa and is predominantly populated by Izons; Epie, Atissa, Gbarain, Ekpetiama, Okordia, Zarama and Biseni clans respectively. Yenagoa Local Government Area is one of the 8 Local Government Areas (LGAs) that make up Bayelsa State. It occupies a total land area of 821.88 sq km with an estimated population of 123,243 people (Bayelsa Facts, 2008), with 70,645 males and 67,152 females. Agriculture, commerce and industry are the major economic sectors in the LGA. The research population of this study were 400 adults who are resident in Yenagoa LGA. These adults were either unemployed or self-employed.

The LGAs were grouped into four axes: Epie, Okordia/Zarama/Biseni, Gbarain Ekpetiama and Atissa respectively. 100 respondents were sampled from each of these groups. Respondents were sampled from offices, schools, small scale industries, entrepreneurs, farmers, fishermen, traders etc. The simple random sampling technique was adopted to ensure that equal chances were given to the seven clans that make up the LGA. The zoning of the LGAs into four ensured that both urban and rural settlements were assessed. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data such as clan, location, educational background etc. Face validity and reliability tests (Test re-test) were conducted to confirm the appropriateness of the research instrument. 30 (thirty adults) participated in the pilot study. They were re-tested four weeks later and their scores correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

The extent to which government has realized sustainable development was measured using a five point likert-like scale. This was stated as follows: U- Undecided, SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, A-Agree and SA-Strongly Agree. Percentage distribution and chi-square were used to analyze the research questions and hypotheses respectively.

1.1.1 Research Question 1

What efforts are being made by government to foster sustainable development of the people thereby eradicating every misinformation, disinformation and ignorance?

Table 1: Efforts made by Government to foster sustainable development

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1	Government has made numerous efforts to foster sustainable development through numerous projects/programmes in our community.	186	46.5	184	46
2	The people are properly informed of the projects/programmes before Government embarks on them.	254	63.5	102	25.5

Table 1 shows that out of 400 respondents, 186 which represent 46.5% agreed that government has made numerous efforts to foster sustainable development by embarking on projects and programmes in their communities while 184 respondents which represents 46% disagreed. Also 254 (63.5%) respondents disagreed that they were being informed before government embarked on any project/programme in their community while 102 (25.5%) respondents agreed.

Table 1 revealed that most persons were aware of government's contribution in community development via various programmes/projects. 46.5% agreed that numerous efforts have been made by government to foster development while 46% disagreed. 63.5% agreed that they were properly informed of project and programmes before Government embarked on them while 25.5% disagreed.

This is shows that there is circulation of information and that there is notification of ear marked projects to the people before government embarks on them. This further agrees with the structure of the local government as the essence of local government administration is to stabilize and rationalize government at the grassroot level in order to facilitate the harnessing of local resources for rapid development through ensuring grassroot participation in the development process. (Anyanwu, 1992).

Thus, it confirms the belief that it is only through an effective local government system that Nigerians human and mineral resources can be mobilized for the development of local communities.

1.1.2 Research Question 2

How far has government gone in seeing to the effective realization of sustainable development for the people in this area?

Table 2 Extent to which Government has seen to effective realization of sustainable development

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1.	Government has made a positive impact in the lives of the people via these programmes and projects	178	44.5	192	48
2.	These programmes/projects are thus successful	156	39	214	53.5

Table 2 shows that 178 respondents which represent 44.5% agreed that Government has made a positive impact in their lives through these programmes and projects while 192 respondents representing 48% disagreed. Also, 156 respondents which represent 39% agreed that these programmes and projects had accomplished their purpose and were thus, successful while 214 representing 53.5% disagreed.

Table 2 revealed that these programmes/projects have not made the desired impact in the lives of the people with regards to their felt-need. It shows dissatisfaction in the level of input by government as more is being expected. 44.5% of respondents showed their satisfaction while 48% were dissatisfied. 39% believes that the programmes/projects are successful while 53.5% are of the opinion that projects have been successfully completed does not mean that their purposes have been actualized.

This agrees with the Ford Foundation report 1962 which states that plans not accepted by the people, who alone can carry them out are only paper plans as the interest of the people in local affairs leads to the growth of their interest in the way in which local government works. This further boosts sustainability as it is a programme or project of the people's interest and need that is bound to last.

Furthermore, this dissatisfaction has encouraged the use of terrorism and kidnapping by the people to actualize their personal desires since government has not made the desired impact in their lives and communities.

1.1.3 Research Question 3

What are the strategies used in realizing sustainable development?

Table 3: Government's strategy in realizing sustainable development

S/No.	Questionnaire Items	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1	The members of our community are solely involved in the planning, mobilization, implementation and execution of these programmes/projects hence these projects/programmes are people-oriented.	110	27.5	240	60
2	These government programmes/projects are sustainable i.e. would last for a long time as it has met our need.	160	40	176	44
3	These initiatives (programmes/projects) shows that government has a keen interest in developing our community.	178	44.5	174	43.5

Table 3 shows that 110 respondents, representing 27.5% agreed that members of their communities were solely involved in the planning, mobilization, implementation and execution processes in the programmes/projects making it people-oriented while 240 (60%) disagreed. 160 (40 %) respondents agreed that government programmes/projects in their communities would last for a long time as it meets their needs; indicating that projects were sustainable while 176 (44%) disagreed. 178 (44.5%) agreed that these initiatives (programmes/projects) by government indicates that government has a keen interest in developing their communities while 174 (43.5%) disagreed.

Table 3 show that most persons in the various communities in the LGA, disagreed to the fact that government's intention for their development is real and that these programmes/projects are for their benefit.

60% of the respondents disagreed that members of their community are solely involved in the planning, mobilization and execution of the projects/programmes by government while 27.5% agreed. This means that the people are not involved in the community development process. 44% disagreed that the various government projects in their communities were sustainable while 40% agreed. Also, 44.5% agreed (as to 43.5% who disagreed) that these initiatives by government show that government is a keen interest in developing these communities.

This shows that the strategy adopted by government is not producing the desired result on the people. As Ihejirika (2007), rightly puts, any programme that is planned and imposed on people no matter how developmental, stands the risk of being abandoned or vandalized because the people do not see such a programme as their own. Hence, such is not community development.

1.1.4 Test of Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between those who are aware and those who are unaware of Government's contributions through various projects and programmes.

Table 4: Chi-square Analysis of Respondents

	X^2 cal	DF	X^2 tab	Decision
Hypothesis 1	35.5	1	3.84	significant
Hypothesis 2	2.64	1	3.84	N/S
Hypothesis 3	30.49	2	5.99	significant

The hypothesis is tested using Chi-Square (X^2) statistics. Table 4 shows that the computed X^2 is 35.5 while the table value is 3.84 at 0.05 level of significance and 1 degree of freedom (df). Since the calculated value exceeds the table value, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H_A). This therefore implies that there is significant difference between those who are aware and those who are unaware of government contributions through various projects and programmes. This further indicates that most persons are aware of various government programmes and projects in their communities.

1.1.5 Test of Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that Government has made an impact in the lives of the people via these programmes and projects.

Table 4 also shows that the computed Chi-Square (X^2) is 2.64 while the table value at 0.05 level of significance is 3.84. Since the calculated X^2 is smaller than the table value, we reject the alternate hypothesis (H_A) of

significance difference and accept the null hypothesis. This implies that there is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that government has made an impact in the lives of the people via these programme/projects. This implies that these programmes/projects have not made an impact in the lives of the people though they have been executed.

1.1.6 Test for hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that Government's plan for improving the standard of living of the people is feasible and realizable.

Table 4 further shows that the computed chi-square (X^2) value is 30.49 which is greater than the table value of 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that government's intention for full development of the people is genuine. This means that most people disagreed that government really intends to bring about positive change in the lives of the people.

2. Conclusions

A major finding of this research is that people are aware of government's programmes and projects yet they are not involved in the process of initiating, planning and implementation of the programmes and projects. The implication however is that people are not satisfied with the strategy adopted by government in the Community Development process. In addition, these programmes and project are not making the right impact in the various communities thus they are not truly appreciated by the people even though they recognize these programmes and projects.

Since this research revealed that the people do not agree that government has a keen interest in their development and that government intends these programmes and projects to be feasible and sustainable; it therefore becomes relevant for government to revisit their strategy and approach in the community development process of this area by involving the people in initiating, planning and implementation of various programmes in their communities.

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