Strategies of Community Development in Promotion of Social Change in Participating Communities in the Society

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Abstract

There are many strategies of community development in promotion of social change in participating communities in the society. Some of the strategies of community development which are usually employed in promotion of social change in participating communities in the society that the paper examined are conscientisation strategy, group action strategy, co-operative grouping strategy and empowerment strategy. It should be noted that social change as change in behaviour of people clearly manifests over a period of time in the society. Social actions stimulate social change in human environment. The paper recommended among other things that there should be concerted efforts to enhance effective conscientisation of all relevant stakeholders in community development which will promote a more reliable platform for promotion of social change in various participating communities in the society, community development should be driven by common vision and interest of the relevant stakeholders in the participating communities in the society and others.

Keywords: Strategies, community development, promotion, social change, participating communities and society.

1.0   Introduction

The concept of social change simply means change in behaviour of people over a period of time in the society. Moore (1967) and Schaefer (2005) define social change as a significant change or alteration over time in behaviour patterns and culture of people in the society. Apparently, social change is anchored on social action in human environment.

The human social action is usually guided by group dynamics in the society. This means that every human social action is guided by the way in which people in a group behave towards each other in certain situations when they work together for a common purpose in the society.

With the international community becoming very much aware of the potentialities of using community-oriented group actions to stimulate social change that is anchored on social action for improved living conditions of people in various communities, it is interesting to note that human group actions have continued to play a major role in promotion of social change in participating communities in the society. Community development as a process whereby the efforts of the members of the participating communities are united with those of governmental authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporate organizations (COs), wealthy individuals and others helps very greatly to stimulate consciousness among the relevant stakeholders to provide a more reliable platform or arrangement for promotion of social change in the society UNESCO. (1975:5) defines community development as:

> The process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with
> those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and
> cultural conditions of communities, to integrate those communities into the
> life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress.

This implies the promotion of collaborative efforts of members of the participating communities with those of governmental authorities and other relevant stakeholders in order to contribute reasonably to community development in particular and national development in general.

The concept of community development can equally be defined as the process through which the efforts of members of the participating communities are united with those of governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporate organizations, concerned wealthy individuals among other stakeholders in order to improve the poor living conditions of people in the participating communities in the society. The collaborative efforts of all the relevant stakeholders in community development initiatives remains the focus of community development process in the contemporary global environment.

The adequate involvement of all the relevant stakeholders notably the members of the participating communities, governmental authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporate organizations (COs), concerned public spirited wealthy individuals among other relevant stakeholders clearly tends to indicate that community development enterprises should not be entirely the sole responsibility of any of the identified stakeholders if meaningful sustainable results will be achieved in improving the living conditions of people in the participating communities in the society. Essentially, the collaborative efforts of the relevant stakeholders in

community development should be driven by common vision and interest in the participating communities. Indeed, community development should be driven by clearly shared vision in the participating communities in the society, Nwagbala (2013) states that shared vision usually implies a sense of mutual accountability in a group as a team. This implies that shared vision bestows collective responsibilities on the relevant stakeholders in community development to work collaboratively to improve people's living conditions in the participating communities in the society.

The relevant stakeholders in community development will usually respond to certain prevailing situations or problems as a group of people or groups of people who must employ social actions in order to address effectively the prevailing local problems through identification of problems, prioritization of the identified problems, community development planning, project implementation, management and evaluation in the participating communities. Odokara (1974) states that adult education and community development as an integrated approach to promote innovation should provide a more reliable and comfortable platform in order to enhance effective implementation of change in the society. Community development as a process of improving the poor living conditions of people must explore ways of being responsive to the changing needs of members of the participating communities in the society.

Fundamentally, community development does not encourage people to work individually in order to improve the poor living conditions of people in the participating communities. Community development, however, encourages people to always explore the opportunities of coming together to work as a team or group in order to be able to promote social change that will help them to address effectively the prevailing problems in the participating communities in the society. In the views of Nwagbala, (2013) working collaboratively is not something that happens automatically in the society. It becomes obvious that the members of the participating communities must understand the urgent need for them to come together in order to be able to identity the problems confronting their various local communities and then proffer possible solutions to such identified community problems. Odokara (1974) asserts that community development as a process expects groups to change or control their environment by recognizing the need for them to come together for the purpose of identifying their local problems by themselves and proffering solutions in order to mobilize available resources and assistance so as to be able to take appropriate action. The appropriate action in this circumstance will stimulate social action that will help to improve the people's poor living conditions in the participating communities.

2.0   The Strategies of Community Development in Promotion of Social Change   in   Participating Communities in the Society

The strategies of community development in promotion of social change in participating communities in the society are the followings:
1.   Conscientisation strategy
2.   Group action strategy
3.   Co-operative grouping strategy
4.   Empowerment strategy.

2.1.   Conscientisation Strategy

Conscientisation is an important strategy which is employed in community development in order to stimulate consciousness in people to promote social change in the participating communities in the society. Conscientisation as Freire (1985) advocates inculcates critical awareness in the recipients to really understand their situations with a view to addressing them appropriately in the society. In stimulating social change, conscientisation enables people to depart from their individualistic tendency and approach to issues with a view to embracing a more reliable collective resolve in addressing community problems in the participating communities.

Interestingly, before the conscientisation of members of various groups, it has been observed that human groups show certain behaviours which do not promote social change in the participating communities. Pratt and Boyden (1985) outline the behaviours of human groups before conscientisation to include the followings:
1.   Pronounced individualism
2.   Little or no interest in community development projects
3.   Poor participation of people in decision-making process
4.   Lack of critical awareness of people's situation
5.   Lack of organizations to effectively address prevailing problems in the participating communities.
6.   Lack of confidence in the people's own ability to change the situation among others.

However, after conscientisation of the people in the participating communities, new approach and behaviour of the people to community development usually emerge. This can be attributed to the emergence of attitudinal change in the people who have been conscientized to have better understanding of stimulating

community development in their various local communities. Pratt and Boyden (1985) state the qualities of emerging groups after conscientisaition of people in the participating communities to include among other things the followings:

1. Internal cohesion
2. Sense of solidarity
3. Active participation
4. Increased confidence
5. Shared collective responsibilities
6. Reduced dependence
7. Involvement in establishing contacts with other groups, organizations and institutions.
8. Establish contact with government among others.

The development of a new consciousness is not an easy task to achieve in the society. Aruma (2011) states that the development of a new consciousness demands demonstration of strong patriotic disposition and commitment.

2.2. Group Action Strategy

Fundamentally, group action strategy is an important strategy of community development in promotion of social change in the participating communities in the society. There is no human endeavour or activity which a person carries out that does not really affect other people in the society. The concept of group action in community development endeavours or efforts can simply be defined as a group of people who come together in a particular participating community with the ultimate purpose of carrying out social action or human activity that will impact positively on the members of the group and other people in the participating communities in the society. Nwagbala (2013) states while quoting Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (1995) that people who, indeed, want to work collaboratively need a strong sense of their own identity and great desire for mutual trust and strong commitment in the society. The people involved in group action must be motivated by a common vision to improve people's living conditions in the participating communities in the society.

Group action strategy is not action-oriented human activity that an individual will sustain alone in the participating communities in the society. Indeed, group action strategy demands collective responsibilities that will help people to address prevailing community problems in the participating communities. D'Souza (1995) observes that members of a group share responsibilities for their effectiveness. Community development as people-oriented development is anchored on group action and shared responsibilities in the participating communities in the society. The relevant stakeholders in community development efforts to promote social change in participating communities have their own respective shared responsibilities which are implemented accordingly to improve people's living conditions in the society.

Every social action is a joint undertaking for group action which is implemented in practice based on the principles of co-operation as a team that is committed to work together in order to succeed in improving the people's poor living conditions in the participating communities. Collaborative engagement of members of a social group demands working together to achieve a common vision in the participating communities. Nwagbala (2013) rightly states that working together demands conscious commitment to values and convictions. Consequently, the members of various participating communities are encouraged to remain committed in their collective resolve to work together to achieve a common vision of improving people's living conditions through the instrumentality of promoting social change in the concerned communities in the society.

Essentially, every community development-oriented group action or social action is a joint undertaking by the members of participating communities so as to improve people's living conditions in the society. Indeed, for group action to be meaningful in yielding the desired results, the members of the group must have certain things in common which characterize the group. The members of the group must, indeed, have a common identity, common problems which confront them, common interest and goal driven development initiatives. Pratt and Boydlu (1985) rightly assert that the members of a large group in group action may have the followings:

1. Common needs which require common services to address
2. A sense of identity which helps the members of the group to act as a group
3. The strength for future group action in new projects.

Apparently, group action strategy is a dynamic process of stimulating group action-oriented initiatives to promote social change for sustainable improved living conditions in the participating communities in the society.

2.3 Co-operative Grouping Strategy

Co-operative grouping strategy is also an important strategy of community development in promotion of social change in participating communities in the society. In human history, the most oppressed groups of people are not favoured in certain situations when those in governmental affairs take decisions that may impact on them in the society. The people in this category are mostly the rural poor who dominate most of the rural communities in the society. Although, Nigeria has experienced an uninterrupted democratic government for fifteen (15) years now (1999-2014), the rural poor as the most oppressed group of people still remains voiceless in a number of

issues affecting them in various participating local communities in the country. Pratt and Boyden (1985) note that the people in this group are those with a silent voice and who are usually isolated by the society from decision-making process thereby depriving them of taking part in decisions which most affect their own lives in various participating communities in the society.

It is important to see that the people in governmental authorities are re-orientated to understand the need to provide an opportunity for people at local community level to be involved adequately enough in decision making process that will ultimately affect their poor living conditions in the participating communities. In the views of Odokara (1974) every person has an opportunity to participate in making decisions affecting him, his family, his neighbourhood as well as his community in order to improve the living conditions of people in the participating communities. Through the instrumentality of co-operative groupings the people still establish co-operative- oriented community development projects that will stimulate social change in various participating communities in Nigeria.

2.4   Empowerment Strategy

The concept of empowerment of people is simply defined as the provision of adequate opportunities to people in order to enable them to develop their potentials so as to be able to contribute reasonably enough to development at community, local government, state and national levels in particular and the global environment in general. The word to empower people in the context of its usage in this paper simply means to give people the opportunity to have measures of control over their lives in the society. Indeed, people can be empowered to promote social change in order to improve their living conditions in the participating communities and help them contribute to the growth of economy in various capacities or ways in the various participating communities in the society. Understandably, knowledge is power. Therefore, knowledge acquisition is part of human lifelong learning enterprise in order to explore human environment for healthy and improved living conditions in the society. Ngwu (2006) states while quoting Muller (1997) that non-formal basic education focuses on teaching of basic learning needs in the society. Ngwu (2006) further asserts that basic learning needs consist of the important learning tools notably literacy, problem-solving, oral expression as well as logical and critical thinking. These learning tools are, indeed, essential to enable the recipients to be able to face the daily challenges of life in the contemporary society that is driven by knowledge economy.

Essentially, knowledge is the bedrock of people's empowerment in such critical areas of human endeavours as the followings:
1.   Economic empowerment
2.   Financial empowerment
3.   Political empowerment
4.   Technological empowerment among others.

The acquisition of knowledge and skills empowers people economically, politically, socially, scientifically and technologically among others to contribute remarkably to promotion of social change in the society.

Literacy for empowerment offers a lot of opportunities to people to contribute their own little quota to community development in the various communities in the society. Aruma (2006) states that literacy for empowerment helps to improve the status of people and also enables them to participate actively in their various communities in particular and the society in general. Literacy for empowerment stimulates awareness creation in people to understand the urgent need to identity their community problems and proffer possible solutions to the identified problems by mobilizing themselves and their scarce resources for promotion of community development initiatives that will improve people's living conditions in the participating communities. Aruma (2006) asserts that literacy for empowerment helps to mobilize, develop, encourage and strengthen enquiry minds in people of various communities to acquire relevant knowledge and skills that will enable them to be functional members of their respective participating communities. World Conference on Education for All-WCEFA (1990) states that literacy, problem-solving, oral expression, logical and critical thinking as well as acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitude are required by people in order to be able to:
1.   Survive
2.   Participate actively in decision making.
3.   Develop their potential or capabilities fully.
4.   Live a happy life
5.   Secure employment
6.   Participate actively in promoting development
7.   Improve their living conditions
8.   Engage in lifelong learning

Indeed, literacy for empowerment helps people to generate employment opportunities, create wealth, and generate income in the process of stimulating social change in the participating communities in the society.

3.0 Conclusion

The relevant stakeholders in community development usually respond to certain prevailing situations or problems as a group of concerned people or groups of people who are committed to employ social actions in order to be able to address community problems in various participating communities in the society. This has to be achieved through the instrumentality of a more reliable platform or arrangement of community development process that encourages sustainable community mobilization that will enhance effective identification of community problems, prioritization of the identified community needs and implementation of community development initiatives that will promote social change in the participating communities in the society. This will enable the present generation and, of course, future generations to enjoy the socio-economic rewards inherent in collaborative community development process in promotion of social change in participating communities in the society.

4.0 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on issues discussed on the strategies of community development in promotion of social change in participating communities in the society:

1. There should be concerted efforts to enhance effective conscientisation of all relevant stakeholders in community development that will promote a more reliable platform for promotion of social change in the participating communities in the society. This will stimulate a new consciousness in community development initiatives that will promote social change in the participating communities.

2. Community development should be driven by common vision and interest of the relevant stakeholders in various participating communities in the society. The shared vision and interest will certainly bestow collective responsibilities on the relevant stakeholders in community development to work collaboratively together to promote social change that will translate into improved living conditions of people in the participating communities in the society.

3. The government should create an enabling environment that will encourage community development concerns in promotion of social change that will impact positively in improving the living conditions of people in the participating communities in the society. The community –oriented efforts to promote social change will reduce the rural urban migration of people to developed areas or cities in search of non-existing white cola jobs.

4. There should be a strong resolve by all relevant stakeholders in community development efforts to provide adequate resources that will stimulate collaborative concerns to promote social change that will improve people's poor living conditions in the participating communities. This strong resolve of all relevant stakeholders in community development initiatives should be sustained through strong commitment to honour shared responsibilities in community development initiatives in the participating communities.

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