

Participatory Rural Appraisal Technique for Enhancing Rural Participation in the Implementation of Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a technique for enhancing rural participation in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intends to offer a bottom-up strategy through which rural dwellers could make inputs necessary for successful implementation of SDGs. The paper therefore forges a synergy between PRA and SDGs where the former could be used as a matrix for engaging rural dwellers in the implementation of the later. Secondary data through descriptive presentation and analysis was adopted. The paper concludes that PRA when fully tapped possesses relevant potentials that can bring rural populace into the heart of the implementation of SDGs.

Introduction

Rural communities and their economies constitute a very important sector of national economy and by extension global economy. Ogunfowora (1981) reveals that over 70 per cent of the population in many developing countries lives in the rural areas. They are engaged mostly in primary production providing the bulk of the food, raw materials and national agricultural exports which generates a significant proportion of foreign exchange earnings. The contributions of rural sector to national economic growth and development cannot be over emphasized. Similarly, Nyagba (2009) noted that the rural population represents an average of over 60 per cent of the total pupation on the continent of Africa and about 90 per cent of the rural labour force engages directly or indirectly in agricultural, activities. All these observations underscore the importance of rural sector to national development.

In the same vein, it is important to note that the role of the rural sector is more pronounced in the implementation of government policies and programs. The rural dwellers are expected to make inputs in the formulation and implementation of programmes if such programmes must succeed. It is against this backdrop that rural dwellers are considered as indispensable stakeholders in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Apart from serving as providers of relevant primary information (facts and figures) for implementation of the Goals, they are also effective in evaluation by revealing how the SDGs have impacted their lives thereby providing the parameters for assessing the success in the implementation of the Goals. This prime importance necessitates that a strategy must be designed that could enhance the integration of rural dwellers in the implementation of SDGs. Participatory Rural Appraisal technique is considered imperative in this regard.

Statement of the Problem

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted for implementation in Nigeria between year 2000 - 2015 has not yielded significant desired result. This was due to some challenges. The United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) noted that “poor governance and integrating of the MDGs into national development strategies have been a challenges while other challenges include a weak monitoring mechanism for the MDGs and low stakeholder involvement (UNDP 2007:10). The rural dwellers, private sector, civil society organizations, etc were not integrated in the implementation of MDGs.

Although MDGs recorded successes in some areas like MDG 3: Gender Equality and Woman Empowerment MDGs 4: Reduction in Child Mortality etc Joel (2016:213), the SDGs were later adopted in the year 2015 to serve as the core of a universal post-2015 development agenda and consolidate on the gains of MDGs. In order to avoid the pitfall of exclusiveness of rural dwellers in the implementation of MDGs, this paper offers Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) technique as a strategy to elicit inputs of rural populace thereby mobilizing them to embrace SDGs as part of their own initiative to develop themselves.

Objectives of the Paper

The general objective of this paper is to construct a technique that will enhance rural participation in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The specific objectives are to:

- (i) identify the areas of engaging rural dwellers in the implementation SDGs;
- (ii) highlight the Participatory Rural Appraisal exercise procedure in the implementation of SDGs ; and
- (iii) examine the merits of adopting Participatory Rural Appraisal in the implementation of SDGs.

Methodology

This paper relied mainly on the use of secondary data. The presentation and analysis of data were descriptive and the content analysis of books, journals and relevant internet information were applied.

Conceptual Clarifications

Under this sub-section the concept of implementation and rural participation will be examined.

Implementation

The verb to implement means to carry out, fulfill or to accomplish a task. Implementation is often used in relation to policy. Policy implementation is of critical importance to the success of government. However good the political system is, no policies can succeed if the implementation does not bear relationship to the intentions of the policy adopters. The implementation aspect is now becoming a concern and key element in development strategy.

Sapru (2004) conceived policy implementation as the process of putting policy into effect by public and private individuals. Implementation can be seen essentially in terms of the nature and degree of control exercised over the operations of a policy, programme or project. In its most general form, it is the phase between a decision and operations. Implementation seeks to determine whether an organization is able to carry out and achieve its stated objectives. It involves developing and pursuing a strategy of organization and management to ensure that the policy process is completed with the minimum of delays, costs and problems.

Onah (2005) sees implementation as that which involves translation of goals and objectives of policy into concrete achievement through varied programmes. Implementation makes a policy happen and it also gives policy a life. More specifically, the task of implementation is to form a bridge that allows the objectives of public policies to be achieved as outcomes of governmental activity. Thus public policies in the form of statement of goals and objectives are put into action programmes that aim to realize the ends stated in the policy.

Rural Participation

Participation is the key to inclusion of human resources in development effort. Previously, development planners had overlooked the contributions that people could make and the skills that they could bring to development projects. A refocusing of development strategies by governments and organizations all over the world has led to the emergence of people's participation as a central concern because of the need to involve people more directly in development process. The term participation is very often used to cover all the forms of action by which citizens take part in the operation of administration. It is broadly used to refer to the role of members of the general public as distinguished from that of appointed officials, including civil servants in influencing the activities of government or in providing directly for community needs.

Participation goes beyond voting to imply the active involvement in development of the rural people particularly disadvantaged groups that form the mass of the rural population and have previously been excluded from the development process. Rural participation can therefore be defined to mean active involvement of people in relatively remote and less populated areas in decision making process on issues that relates to data gathering, programme and project choice and location, etc in SDGs' implementation as it affects their lives. Participation which means the degree of influence exercised by the people on decision making process in government and administration can assume different typology. The major typologies according to (Masud, 2013) are: democratic, social, administrative and community development participation.

Democratic Participation

Democratic participation may be called political participation. It is the basis of democracy and political modernization or development. It is concerned with the activity by private citizens designed to influence governmental decision making. Democratic participation brings citizen into the governance process.

Social Participation

This includes all types of participation. Social participation sometimes takes the form of social protest. The deprived section people have less access to the center of authority to influence the decision making process in government and politics. In this situation, social protest can be an effective form of communication between social and political system.

Administrative Participation

This is also referred to as “Programme Participation”. It is synonymously used with decision making process such as policy planning, programme planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. Participation of citizens at any or all the phases of policy could be described as administrative participation.

Community Development Participation

Community development is the process by which the people combine their efforts with a view to improving the socio-economic and cultural life of the communities. Engaging and encouraging people to become self-reliant in socio-economic activities and nation building through mobilization and utilization of resources are part of community development participation.

Rural participation can therefore be defined to mean the engagement and mobilization of the people of the grass root (rural populace) in the planning, programming and evaluation of SDGs and targets with the aim of improving the socio-economic as well as well as political well being of rural dwellers. This involves periodic and consistent interactions with people in rural areas in order to ensure that they experience improvement in their means of livelihood through the implementation of SDGs.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Technique

The SDGs required the participation of rural community dwellers for successful implementation. Hence, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) remains one of the unique strategies to elicit the input of rural dwellers into the implementation of SDGs.

Dlakwa (2009) noted that critical for policy formulation is the need to generate data on the communities as well as apply appropriate indicators in studying the socio-economic profile of the communities to be covered by the policy. This means that the socio-economic profile of rural communities is necessary for effective formulation, implementation and evaluation of SDGs as a global policy.

One means for generating such data is the participatory approach to research in which policy experts, public officials and academicians or policy analysts team up with the potential beneficiaries of the policy to conduct a rapid appraisal of the communities to be affected by the policy. This technique is often called rural rapid appraisal (RRA) or Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as used in this paper.

The PRA as a data gathering technique is employed by public policy makers for the sole purpose of engaging target beneficiaries of policy decisions to play an active role in identifying and analyzing problems as well as designing plans for overcoming them. Rather than relying on pre-determined hypotheses or theoretical claims made by politicians and top public officials to guide the choice of data or policy options in a linear fashion, PRA is sensitive to the opinion and ideas of the target beneficiaries.

In this context, PRA allows the representatives of the target beneficiaries to disclose their felt needs and select policy options of the SDGs that are compatible with their belief systems. This practice makes selected policy options to be sustainable since the target beneficiaries would have been familiar and comfortable with them. Participatory Rural Appraisal is thus the hallmark of bottom up approach to policy decision making. It is a veritable instrument for ensuring ownership of Public Policy (i.e SDGs) by rural communities who stand to benefit from it.

Procedure of PRA Exercise

The conduct of Participatory Rural Appraisal exercise follows certain process which progresses in an iterative fashion as illustrated in figure 1.1. Dlakwa (2009) explains that PRA involves several visitations made to community by public officials and different approaches or skills are employed in sensitizing the target communities.

Firstly, a brainstorming session can be conducted for this purpose. The type of information needed and the representatives of various interest groups in the community that will participate in the PRA will be determined at this session. As a follow up to this, a questionnaire could be prepared in consultation with the affected community in core welfare indicators (CWI) and administered on the community. This exercise should take a couple of days during which members will brainstorm on issues affecting the community and work in groups to suggest ways of investigating the identified problems.

Secondly, the brainstorming session will be followed by field visitation of key area through transect walk or touring of notable sites. Tape-recorded discussions and the taking of photographs could be done during this retooled community survey. The result of the tour will form a basis for designing informal or unstructured interview schedule. After the PRA team has reviewed all these activities with the public official or a legislator that might have been involved in the policy formulation, the next step is to involve the participants in community mapping and ranking using sociometrics, Venn diagram, timeline and pie charts. When the data collected have been collated and analyzed and a review meeting held (iterative process continues) the findings would be disclosed to members of the community for their feedback. It is after an exhaustive deliberation of the issue and

a consensus reached between the affected communities and the public officials on the team that the final choice of public policy priorities would be made.

The rectangle in the middle of figure 1 represents the iterative process linking the key five activities and the data gathering team whose mission is to achieve the objectives stated in the box to the left hand side.

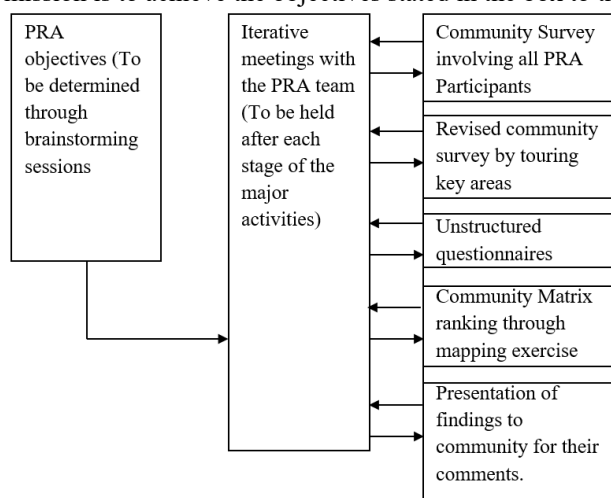


Figure 1 PRA Exercise Procedures

Source: Adopted from Szymanski, M., L. Whitewing and J. Colleti cited in Dlakwa 2009:75.

As a bottom-up approach, under PRA, the policy analysts perform the role of a facilitator. It is the people (rural dwellers) that stand to benefit from the policy intervention that will dictate the rhythm of policy choice while the policy analyst or government’s representative on the policy decision board would only act as a facilitator and technical advisor. In this connection, it is the rural community members that will make the choice of preferred project, where they will be sited and the group to derive benefit from it. The policy analysts and experts or representatives of SDGs in this case are expected to listen attentively to the contributions of community members.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs is a plan of action for people, plants and prosperity. It is officially known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs is a set of seventeen (17) inspirational goals and one hundred and sixty nine (169) targets between them. as a post 2015 Development Agenda, the goals of SDGs (www.un.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals) are summarized below:

- Group 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere: This goals aims at eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day by ensuring significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources through sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels based on pro-poor and gender sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradivative actions.
- Goal 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture: This goals targets at ending hunger and ensure access by all people to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round through sound agricultural productivity and sustainable food production system.
- Goal 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages: This goal aimes at reducing by 2030, the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births and substantially reduce the number or deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.
- Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all: This goal aims among other things at ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes through the elimination of gender disparities in education as well as providing safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.
- Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls: This aims at ending by 2030, all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources as well as access to ownership and control of land and other property in accordance with national laws.
- Goal 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. This goal aims

- at achieving by 2030, universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all through the implementation of integrated water resources management at all levels, including through trans-boundary cooperation as appropriate.
- Goal 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all: This goal aims at ensuring by 2030, universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services through expanded infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and landlocked developing countries in accordance with their respective programmes support.
- Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. By 2030, this goal aims at achieving higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors based on full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities and equal pay for work of equal value.
- Goal 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation. This goal aims at developing quality reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure for sustainable industrialization by increasing the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries to financial services, including affordable credit and their integration into value chains and markets.
- Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries. By 2030, this goal aims at progressive achievement and sustenance of income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average. This is to be achieved by ensuring equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of income, including by eliminating discriminatory laws policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislating policies and action in this regard.
- Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive safer, resilient and sustainable. This goal aims by 2030 providing access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums. This is to be achieved by enhancing inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.
- Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. This goal is to be achieved through the implementation of 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns with focus on achieving the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources as well as reducing waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.
- Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. This goal is to be achieved through the integration of climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning. This is supported by promoting mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing states, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.
- Goal 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. This is to be achieved by minimizing and addressing the impact of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation of all levels.
- Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and half and reserve land degradation and half biodiversity loss. By 2020, this aims of ensuring the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of forestial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements and by 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development.
- Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This is to be achieved by significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere, promoting rule of law and substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms.
- Goal 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. This goal aims at strengthening domestic resource mobilization including through informational support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection as well as mobilizing additional financial resources for

developing countries from multiple sources.

Applications of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The seventeen goals contained in the SDGs from the first one which is concerned with eradication of poverty to the last goal which relates to strengthening global partnership for sustainable development all have linkages with rural development, hence rural dwellers are considered as major stakeholders.

Therefore, interaction of PRA team with the community and its representative is necessary at all stages of PRA exercise as depicted in figure 2

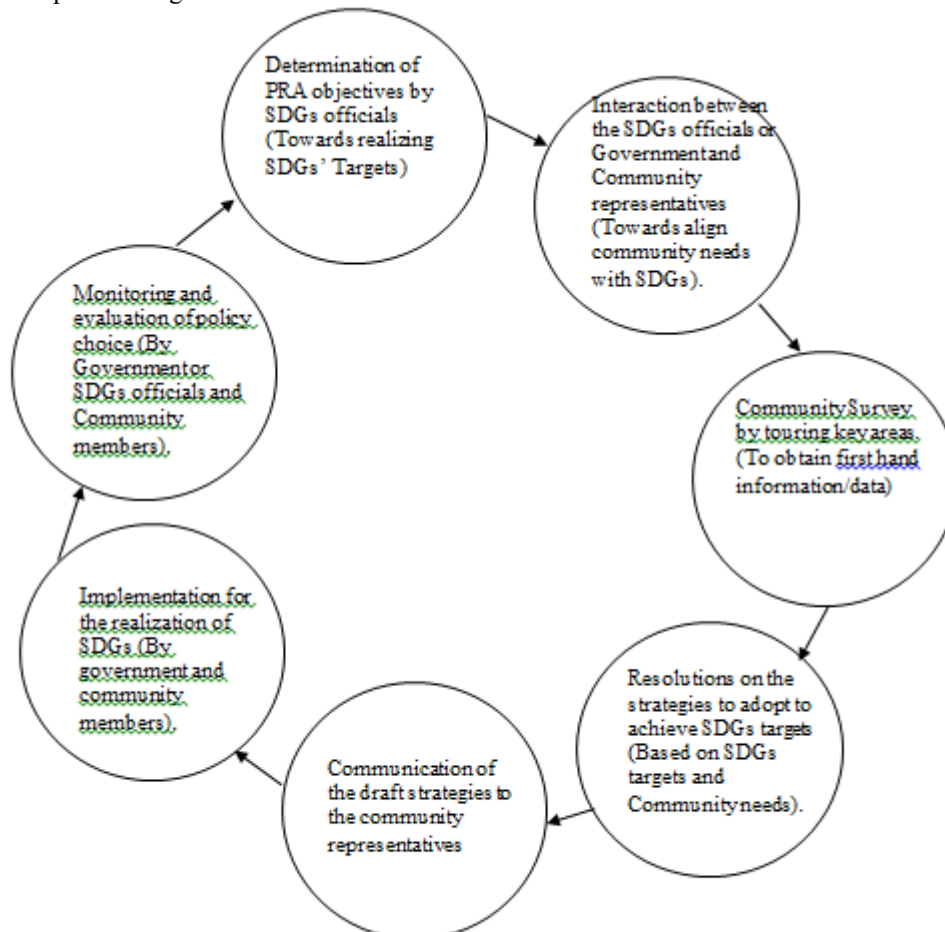


Fig. 2 Projected PRA Cycle for the implementation of SDGs

Source: Constructed by the Author

For instance, in implementing SDGs No.3 which aims at ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages, the PRA team in the form of SDGs official need to brainstorm on the objectives that should be realized during the PRA exercise. Such objectives could be, identifying the common disease in a particular area, examine the root cause(s) of such disease as well as selecting the preventive or curative measures compatible with the community which could be adopted to tackle the disease. In carrying out this exercise, the SDGs officials need to undertake a tour of the areas affected by a disease and also map out the community to clearly indicate the area of coverage. Presentations of the findings of the SDGs official to the community representatives for their comments is necessary before appropriate policy could be formulated by the national government under the auspices of SDGs to improve the health lots of the rural dwellers. By so doing, such policy would have reflected the genuine need of the community members and they would also be willing to reveal information as the goal affects their life during evaluation exercise. The implementation of SDGs is not by any means simplistic as proposed in figure 2. But this is to put forward the general direction and stages the PRA technique involves in enhancing rural participation in the implementation of SDGs.

The merits of PRA technique lies in the fact that; it encourages group learning process which helps to build the capacity of communities whose members could play active part concerning implementing and evaluating development projects that might emanate from the policy choice. The technique also encourages flexibility and adaptability of new sets of conditions or groups found to be relevant to the issue at hand are accommodated in

the interaction process. In addition, the PRA technique facilitates the use of indigenous knowledge by the community in solving critical development problems such as land distribution and use, water resources management and forest reserve management (Dlawka, 2009).

Conclusion and Suggestions

This paper put forward PRA technique as means of enhancing rural participation in the implementation of SDGs. Although PRA could be reduced to rural development tourism if not properly handled, however its strengths of allowing the group (communities) that stands to benefit from the SDGs to dictate the rhythm of policy choice while the policy analysts or SDGs officials on the policy decision board would only act as a facilitator and technical advisor is enormous. Therefore interactions between the SDGs officials and communities representatives at various stages of implementation are incontrovertibly necessary to encourage rural participation which could drive the SDGs implementation to success.

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