

# Community Development Project Abandonment in Nigeria: Causes and Effects

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## Abstract

This paper focused on the tangible dimension of community developments projects, which result to the execution of physical projects which brightens the community. The paper also considered the concepts of project and project abandonment. The causes of project abandonment and its effects on the individuals, community and the government were extensively discussed. Further more, the way forward for community development projects were also highlighted.

## 1.0 Introduction

Individuals, communities and government at all levels desire development in every facet of human endeavour. No matter how development is defined, the project approach is seen to be most practical, since results are visible and measurable. Projects form part of the basis of assessment of a country's development. The aim of development projects in communities is to improve the well being of the members of the communities where the projects are located. Community projects irrespective of the magnitude is capable of brightening the community and trigger off other developmental activities in the community. Community development projects could be disrupted by the approach adopted by the government or donor agencies, the attitude of the community members on finance and execution of the projects.

When community development projects are abandoned, the effect speaks volume on both the members of the community, the community and government.

## 1.1 Concept of Project

The concept of project has been one of the most conducted and misunderstood concepts, by scholars and professionals associated with the use of the term, "Project". Students, business men, civil servants and engineers use the word project as they deem fit and only to cover the activities they are engages in, at a given time. The students will complain "my project is taking all my time and money", the business men says "this is a long term or capital project", the engineer declares; this aspect of the project is complex and difficult. The question is, could the students, business men or engineers have the same thing in mind in their use of the term, project? The answer is NO.

Many attempts had been made by authors to give meaning to the concept of project. To some, project is all capital investments to develop facilities, to provide goods and services which will increase the aggregate consumption benefits of the people (Fubara 1975, Ayo 1988).

Little and Mirlees (1980) defined project as "any scheme or part of a scheme for investing resources which can reasonably be analyzed and evaluated as an independent unit". These definitions relate investment activities to benefit (i.e.) resource flow and output, closely related to the view of this paper is the definition of

There are two dimensions to project. The tangible and the non tangible projects. This paper will focus on the tangible dimension, which results to the execution of physical projects that brightens the community. Physical projects do not only provide the means of making life more meaningful for members of a community, it also results to empowerment, wakening of grass root organization and collective action toward self improvement.

In line with the above, Tamuno and Otto (2000) saw project as an instrument of change, "a co-ordinated series of action resulting from policy decision to change resource combination and levels, so as to contribute to the realization of a country's development objectives".

Amirize (2004) presented project as "any planned or deliberate programme of activities which can provide the support base, to complement efforts of individuals to enhance their well being and solve their peculiar problems".

Physical projects in communities attract other development activities. It acts as a pointer, and a means of assessing the level of development in any given community.

## **1.2 Concept of Project Abandonment**

Longman Dictionary defines abandonment as the act of giving up an action on something completely, with no certain intention of when to resume. When actions and activities on development projects are suspended without any stated time of resumption the projects are said to be abandoned.

In most rural communities, this experience is not strange. There are traceable projects which were aimed at improving the lives of the members of the community in such condition. In some cases, most of the materials used for the project are already out of use due to delay in completion. A good example is a rural water project in Ibaa/Obele communities.

Furthermore, a project is confirmed abandoned when the time lag between suspension and resumption is so much to attract loss and weakening of materials.

According to Tamonu and Otto (2000), there are two time lags, the short-term and long-term. The short term lag, for short-term projects is between 1-2 years, long-term project is between 3-5 years.

Where applicable, a project is termed abandoned when some of the physical features are seen wearing out and becoming out of use, such that will attract cost, for replacement.

### **1.2.1 Causes of Project Abandonment**

The list of the possible causes of project abandonment is endless. This paper will examine the major and contemporary ones.

#### **(1) Choice of Project site or Location**

For community development projects not to be abandoned, the choice of the site is very important. Since the host community must of necessity be the custodian of the project, consensus must be reached on where the project is to be sited before embarking on it.

This situation becomes more dangerous if the project is to be handled by government agencies or external bodies. To achieve the desired result, the institutions in the community such as the chiefs, youths, women and CDC members, (development stakeholders) or beneficiaries need to be consulted on the choice of the project site.

#### **(2) Embarking on Projects without need analysis**

The guiding principle for the success of any project is that it is based on the felt need of the people. Any choice of project that did not represent the need of the majority of the members of the community is already heading for abandonment. The principle of need analysis stresses the identification of the needs of the community and prioritizing same in the order for which the members would expect them met, in the accomplishment of their development desires.

#### **(3) Lack of Social analysis of a projects**

Development projects which ignore the traditional values, and social organization of the intended beneficiaries, has very low success prospect and could be abandoned. No matter how important and most desired a project may be, to the members of a community, if the project goes against the culture practices of the community, the project could be abandoned.

#### **(4) Project Imposition**

By contemporary standard, for a community development project to be executed without any hitch, it must have been initiated by the community members. When community development projects are initiated by the members of the community, there is the assurance that it had passed the acid test of felt need and consultation already done. The possibility of abandonment is no more easy. But when community development projects are planned by government without any input by the community members the projects are seen as being imposed on the community and it could be abandoned at any time. Goodenough (1963) quoted in Hanactor (2010) points out that "development project undertaken in the spirit of imposing our will on others and getting them see the folly of their way and the wisdom of our counsel invariably meets with resistance". This accounts for the failure or abandonment of most federal and state projects in Nigeria.

#### **(5) Improper financial analysis**

Financial analysis is very important for the execution of community development projects. No matter the type of project, sufficient funds are needed for the completion of the project. Most community development projects, usually require counterpart funding, when one or more parties to the funding fails the resultant effect will be insufficient funds for the project, and the project definitely will be abandoned.

#### **(6) Under bidding of projects**

In most communities, community development projects are usually contracted out to specialists, either from within the community or from outside the community. Most contractors in order to win the

contract, deliberately lowers their quotation, only to apply for variation later. Some may go on in the project but will resort to the use of inferior materials or even deviate from the original project plan. Were any of these become the case, the project is at risk of abandonment.

#### **(7) Lack of technical analysis**

Most of the projects in the communities require technical inputs which must be attended to by experts. Where this aspect is not taken into consideration and the local crafts men are not able to handle it, the project would be put to a halt.

#### **1.2.2 Effects of project abandonment**

As earlier pointed out physical projects in communities results to changes in the face look of a community. The true objective of a community development project is to bring about a positive change in the community, empowering the individuals, economically and socially. "Any change which takes place for what ever reason, in one aspect, is likely to lead to a further change in other aspects". (Thompson 1983).

When community development projects are abandoned, the community members are automatically robbed of the expected changes and consequently leave them worst than they were before the project.

When community development projects are abandoned; the effect is felt by the individuals in the community, the community and the government.

#### **1.2.3 Effect on Individuals:**

Execution of projects in communities results to empowerment of members of the communities in the form of employment, contracts etc. If for any reason these projects are abandoned, those working there loose their job and supplies will be stopped. This will result to loss of economic benefits of the projects. In some cases people experience social problems as they will find it difficult to readjust their lives.

#### **1.2.4 Effect on the community:**

Depending on the size and magnitude of the projects, a single project in the community is capable of transforming the face look and the socio-economic features of the community. If the project attracts large population of workers, it is possible to attract some social services which will develop the community. In addition to the above, if the project is one of the government zoned projects, record it will reflect that the community has benefited from government, while physically the project is not existing, and the expected benefits forfeited.

#### **1.2.5 Effect on government:**

Most people see government properties as every bodies property. When government projects in communities are abandoned, the community member go as far as vandalizing the material and what ever is left in the site at that time. On return to site, after years of abandonment, the vandalized materials has to be replaced at extra cost. Sometimes the governments end up re-awarding the contract to new contractor at even a more contract value than at first.

#### **1.2.6 Ways to forestall project abandonment:**

In other to forestall the possibility of community development projects been abandoned, there is need for project analysis. According to Desai (2010) project analysis is the articulation of the various dimensions of a project life cycle, both separately and in relation to each other.

In his view, a multidimensional project analysis should cover the following areas:

- Social analysis
- Institutional analysis
- Financial analysis
- Economic analysis
- Technical analysis

#### **1.3 Social project analysis:**

Social analysis of project takes care of the impact of the project on the people. It considers the sustainability of the proposed project in line with the socio-cultural and demographic characteristics of the project population to win and hold peoples support and to achieve project goals by including changes in social attitudes and behaviour. The analysis also covers the project's cultural acceptability, including its capacity for both adopting to peoples behaviour and perceived needs and for bringing about changes in the members of the community.

#### **1.3.1 Institutional analysis:**

What becomes of a development project depends on the acceptance and participation of the institutions involved in the project. Institutional project analysis provides a means of recognizing and partnering with local or community institutions which if neglected results to projects been abandoned.

### **1.3.2 Financial analysis:**

Financial analysis of a project takes into account the articulation of the cost of the project, the source or sources of the funds. The mode of the collection or contribution in the case of community funded projects. In the case of counterpart funding, the amount or percentage each partner is to contribute and when. In the case of government project, the stages and the amount to release at each stage of the project. Proper financial analysis forestalls abandonment of projects, irrespective of the sponsors.

### **1.3.3 Economic analysis:**

Economic analysis of project explains how resources with the community are allocated to the various needs of the community members. It seeks to determine not only the use of the project, but also whether there is any other alternative way of achieving the same utility, the proposed project will offer. Economic analysis entails a comparison of costs and benefits with or without the project, in terms of their opportunity cost to the community or donor agencies in the best alternative uses. This if taken into consideration will ensure that projects will never lose its value within a short time.

### **1.3.4 Technical analysis:**

Technical project analysis considers the technological requirement of a project and the possible sources of the assistance. There are usually two sources, the local skill and technology or the imported technology. Depending on the type of project to be executed, the analysis will suggest which will be appropriate. Technical analysis will specify the types of professionals required for the project and when they are to be involved.

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