

Citizens' Perception of the Effectiveness of the Various Projects in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The Government of Nigeria in its bid to better the lives of its citizens have through its numerous institutions established several projects. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Ogun State is one of such institutions which plan and implement projects aimed at improving the economic and social standard of women and children considered to be the most vulnerable groups in society. This study therefore examined citizens' perception of the effectiveness of the various projects of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Ogun State. With structured questions as the research instrument, a total of 1500 copies of questionnaire were administered to 250 respondents each from six Local Governments randomly selected from Ogun State. Findings revealed that although 75.3% of the citizens were aware of the presence of the Ministry in the State, many are yet to benefit from their programmes. Citizens' perception of the effectiveness of the various programmes of the Ministry was moderately low at a mean of 11.7400 with standard error of 0.1978 on a 25 point scale. The Ministry did not consistently survey the opinions of the citizens on proposed programmes. The study concluded that the programmes of the Ministry have limited impact and need more publicity in order to meet their stated objectives and recommended that the Ministry survey the opinions of the citizens about proposed and implemented programmes so as to improve citizens' perception of its programmes and create awareness of its programmes to citizens through publicity and workshops organized especially at the grassroots level.

Keywords: Citizens' Perception, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Projects.

1. Introduction

'Projects form part of the basis of assessment of a country's development'. Its essence is to improve 'the wellbeing of the members of the community' through economic and social empowerment (Hanachor, 2012: 33). The government of Nigeria, in its bid to better the lives of its citizens, have made so many policies and programmes. These policies and programmes have failed due to neglect of the target group and corruption in government (Egwemi, 2012). That is why about 105 million Nigerians constituting 70 per cent of the population are still living below poverty line and Nigeria ranks 156 out of 187 countries surveyed in the Human Development Index (HDI) (Microfinance Africa, 2011; Yishau, 2011).

Capital projects are not properly executed or sometimes uncompleted/abandoned due to wrong choice of project site, embarking on projects without need analysis, lack of social analysis of a project, project imposition (Projects not initiated by community members), improper financial analysis, under bidding of projects, and lack of technical analysis (Hanachor, 2012).

The huge investments of capital in the power sector for instance have gone down the drain due to high level of corruption. This has made it difficult for small and medium enterprises which would have contributed to poverty reduction through job creation to thrive. Unemployment is on the rise especially amongst the youth. According to Salami, Nigeria has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in Sub – Sahara Africa (Salami, 2011). Housing is not different as the target population have failed to benefit from the various schemes. Citizens still lack access to safe drinking water as many of the bore holes provided by government are not adequately maintained while most government hospital lack reasonable facilities to enable them function effectively.

Despite the huge resources earmarked for universal education, Nigeria is still one of the world's most illiterate countries. According to the Country Comparison Index of Literacy Level by country in 2012, Nigeria ranked 161 out of 184 countries with 66 per cent literacy rate (Olupohunda, 2012). In the pursuit of sustainable economic growth, a high literacy rate is crucial. It is obvious that majority of Nigerians are yet to benefit from the abundant resources and support from donor agencies.

The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Nigeria has established several projects geared towards fulfilling its vision which are to build a society devoid of gender discrimination, guarantee equal access to wealth creation opportunities, and develop a culture that places premium on the protection of the child and

focus attention of both public and private sectors on issues that promote full participation of women and children in national development.

Such programmes include Women Development Training Centre, Women Fund for Economic Empowerment, Business Development Fund for Women, Juvenile Welfare, Relief and Rehabilitation Services, Sensitization of women in politics, Gender Mainstreaming, Guidance and after care supervision of challenged persons, Care and Protection of Orphan and Vulnerable Children among others. In spite of these efforts, women still have limited access to the projects of the ministry and men still dominate key sectors of the economy. The essence of this study therefore is to examine citizens' perception of the effectiveness of the projects of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Ogun State.

With structured questionnaire as the research instrument, a total of 1500 copies of questionnaire were administered to 250 respondents each from six Local Governments randomly selected from Ogun State. Abeokuta South and Ifo from Ogun Central; Ijebu Ode and Sagamu from Ogun East; and Yewa North and Ado-Odo ota from Ogun West.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1 National Development Plans

National development is the overall development of a country. It entails social-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a nation which can be achieved through development planning (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2011). Development planning implies deliberate control and direction of the economy by government for the purpose of achieving definite target and objectives within a specified period of time (Jhingan, 2005; Ikeanyibe, 2009).

Development planning in Nigeria began during the colonial era with the 1946-56 Ten Year Plan of Development and Welfare. The scope of development broadened after independence with the plan that was expected to last from 1962-1968. Then came the second development plan 1970-1974, the third development plan, 1975-1980, the fourth 1981-1985, and the fifth that was expected to last from 1988-1992 (Sanda, 1991; Osaghae, 2002; Obi, 2005; Hanadu and Okafor, 2009).

The success of these plans were marred by absence of clearly defined objectives, limited financial resources, incomplete feasibility studies and inadequate evaluation, excessive political intervention in economic decisions, inadequate public participation, and serious weaknesses in the processes of plan formulation and implementation. This resulted into the postponement and cancellation of many projects (Marcellus, 2009; Hanadu and Okafor, 2009).

On assumption of power, General Ibrahim Babangida in 1985 introduced the Economic Recovery Programme which brought the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) into Nigeria's economy. SAP as imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank was introduced without considering the economic conditions and the level of affluence and poverty within the society. The idea of the rolling plan came up in 1989 and by 1990, it was introduced to replace the medium type of planning (5 year-plan) (*Library of Congress*, 1991; Asia, 2001; Okojie 2002; Obi, 2005).

Other programmes/projects embarked upon under that administration included: the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) meant to provide feeder roads, electricity, portable water and toilet facilities for the rural dwellers; Peoples Bank of Nigeria and the Community Bank of Nigeria that did not live up to expectation nor actualize the objective of providing micro-credit to the poor who were not able to provide the collateral security requested by the traditional lenders and banks; the National Directorate of Employment established to tackle the problem of mass unemployment; and the late Mariam Babangida's pet project termed Better Life for Rural Women.(Odugbemi et al, 1993; Maduagwu, 2000; Elumilade et al, 2006).

When in 1993, General Sani Abacha came into power; he introduced the Vision 2010 aimed at improving the standard of living in the country. This did not work, as his administration was marked by violation of human rights. "During this period many Nigerians were killed and some were jailed because of the opposition to the General's dictatorship and attempt to rule Nigeria forever" (Gosmit, 2000: 272)

Furthermore, with the return of democracy on May 29, 1999, the federal government embarked on poverty reduction programmes one of which is the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) established in 2002 to eradicate abject poverty in Nigeria by the year 2010. The National Economic Empowerment and

Development Strategy (NEEDS) project launched in May 2004 with similar strategies developed across the 36 states -State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and 774 local government areas of the country- Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Programme (LEEMP) focused on reforming government and institutions to improve service delivery to poor people, eliminate waste, fight corruption, improve people's access to health, education, welfare, employment, empowerment, security and participation in public services amongst others. That project was sequel to the New Partnerships for Africa's Development (NEPAD) an Africa-led strategy directed at the achievement of the international development and Millennium Development Goals (Ajadi et al, 2010). The basic objectives of NEEDS which were to implement a priority action plan of wealth creation, create seven million new jobs, alleviate poverty, and eliminated corruption were not achieved (Vision 20: 2020, 2010).

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on assumption of office on 29th May 2007 made plans towards making Nigeria one of the top 20 economies in the world by the year 2020 (Vision 20: 2020, 2010). The two broad objectives of the vision were the optimization of human and natural resource potentials to achieve rapid and sustained economic growth and translation of economic growth into equitable social development (Obadan and Edo, 2010).

To achieve these objectives, he articulated a seven point agenda that included Energy Emergency; Agriculture and Food Security; Wealth Creation and Poverty Alleviation; Land Reform; Security of Lives and Property; Human Capital Development including compulsory Education for Children; and Transport Revolution including improved Mass Transit (Vision 20: 2020, 2010). He also articulated four special interest areas such as Niger-Delta, Disadvantaged Groups, Due Process, and Rule of Law (Bello-Imam and Abubakre, 2009).

Nigerians did not feel the pulse of the economic agenda of the government as the economic strategies were unclear (Vision 20: 2020, 2010). The country continued to experience epileptic, irregular and insufficient power supply which led to the reduction of income generating opportunities of the informal sectors and increase in the cost of doing business for both informal and formal sectors. Failure in power resulted to massive loss in National productivity, massive unemployment, and high cost of production of finished goods. This also led to the closure or relocation of local and multinational industries respectfully, and affected other sectors of the economy (Bello-Imam, 2009).

The level of technical and economy efficiency in food production was still below standard (Ojeifo, 2009). National security which is needed to move the economy forward has been poorly handled. Armed robbery, kidnapping, and assassination became the order of the day. The amnesty programme in the Niger-Delta did not guarantee safety in the region. Even with the transformation agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan, the situation is still the same. Though "the president urged the nation to expect positive results only from 2013" (Rasheed, 2012).

Despite the fact that development planning has been a consistent phenomenon in Nigeria Administration since 1946, the country is still one of the poorest countries of the world in spite of the abundant natural and human resources in her possession. There has been the problem of urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment, insecurity, and growing inequalities in the country. Incoming governments have failed to learn from the mistakes of past governments.

This is due to so many factors that have come together to fetter Nigeria's development. The factors include the fact that most times, there are no executive capacities responsible for the formulation and implementation of the plan, no consultation with the general public, lack of good government with a sense of commitment towards development, lack of accurate and reliable data, corruption and indiscipline, and the fact that the economy is not diversified. Other sectors such as agriculture are neglected (Lawal and Oluwatoyin, 2009; Hamadu and Okafor, 2009).

It is only when these factors are addressed by the government that the country can make headway in its effort towards development. Without this, the country will continue to be backwards in its development.

2.2 The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development was established in 1995 during the Abacha regime to serve as an office for the Family Support Programme (FSP) and Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). The Ministry was restructured in 1999 and renamed Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development. However, in 2004, the youth development section was severed from it. The Ministry has

established several projects geared towards fulfilling its vision which are to build a society devoid of gender discrimination, guarantee equal access to wealth creation opportunities, develop a culture that places premium on the protection of the child and focus attention of both public and private sectors on issues that promote full participation of women and children in national development.

This vision became vital upon the establishment that gender equality is a development strategy for reducing poverty level among women and men, improving health and living standards, and enhancing efficiency of public investment globally. Thus the attainment of gender equality has become a prerequisite for the attainment of sustainable development (Nigeria Vision 20: 2020, 2010).

To this effect, the federal government through the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development sought programmes to empower the women. In addition to women empowerment, provision for the advancement and protection of children and the full integration of the physically challenged into the planning process of the country was made.

Some of such projects include the establishment of skill acquisition centres, cassava/rice cottage industries, palm oil cottage industries, farm craft centre for the blind, youth development/civic centres, national children resource centre, rehabilitation centres, orphan and vulnerable children centres, international programme on violence against women, Child Rights Act popularization and human right protection for children programmes, Nigerian Children Trust Fund, material assistance to old people focused NGOs and old people's homes, and Business Development Fund for Women (BUDFOW)/Women Fund for Economic Empowerment (WOFEE) (Federal Government of Nigeria 2012 budget).

The Ministry executes these projects through collaboration and partnership with Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as other private groups and works with relevant line ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information and Ministry of Labour and Productivity. Other stakeholders include international agencies, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Department of International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), IFAD, and other multilateral and bilateral organizations (Ministry SERVICOM Charter 2012).

As part of its activities, the Ministry ensures effective implementation of treaties, conventions, declarations and policies approved by Nigeria for the promotion of human rights and advancement of Nigerian women such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), African Women's Protocol, Beijing Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), NEEDS/SEEDS, etc.

To ensure that these programmes get to every part of the country, the Ministry was established in each state of the federation. The ministry was created in Ogun State in June 2003 from the defunct Ministry of Industries and Social Development and charged with the responsibility of improving the economic and social standard of women and children, ensuring the sustenance of gender equality by total elimination of various forms of discrimination and violence against women and children, promoting social stability and development in the state, and collaborating with relevant stakeholders such as the federal agencies and NGOs in order to implement relevant Laws/Acts that affect women and children (*Ministry of Women and Social Development Annual Report, 2010*).

The Ministry which is presently lead by the honorable Commissioner, Mrs Elizabeth Sonubi, performs its tasks through seven departments and works with sixty NGOs (local and international) to implement relevant laws/Acts that affect women and children. As much as possible, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Ogun State domesticates the policies, bills and programmes initiated by the ministry at the federal level. Every year, part of the budget of the state is devoted to the Ministry to enable it perform its functions. According to the 2012 budget, out of the =N=70,073,467,590.98 allocated for recurrent expenditure, =N=372,050,934.70 (0.36%) was for the Ministry. Out of the =N=110,008,624,934.83 allocated as capital expenditure, =N=400,000,000.00 (0.36%) was allocated to the Ministry. The Ministry is expected to generate revenue estimate of =N=900,000.00 (*Ogun State 2012 Budget*).

3. Respondents' Perception of Activities of the Understudied Ministry

A total of 1500 copies of questionnaire were administered to 250 respondents each from six Local Governments randomly selected from Ogun State. Out of the 1193 (93.1%) respondents that answered the first question on

their awareness of the presence of the Ministry in the State, 75.3% were positive. Six hundred and thirty five (53%) respondents out of 1198 agreed that the ministry has been the most active Ministry in the State. Only 47.2% (560) out of the 1187 respondents agreed that there was a high level of awareness of the Ministry in their community while 50.8% out of the 1183 respondents agreed that developmental programmes have been organized by the Ministry within their community. Responses to the remaining questions are found in the table below.

Table 1: Respondents' perception of the effectiveness of the activities of the Ministry

	Perception	Positive responses	Negative responses	Total
5	I benefited greatly at least from one of the programmes listed above	575(48.2%)	619(51.8%)	1194(93.0%)
6	I benefited greatly from two or more of the projects listed above	437(36.9%)	746(63.1%)	1183(92.3%)
7	The projects executed by the Ministry have been harmful to my community	256(21.5%)	932(78.5%)	1188(92.7%)
8	The projects executed by the ministry have contributed to peaceful/ harmonious relations in my community	557(47.1%)	625(52.9%)	1182(92.3%)
9	The projects executed by the ministry have contributed to peaceful/ harmonious relations in my family	466(39.7%)	707(60.3%)	1173 (91.6%)
10	I have been discriminated against because I participated in one of the ministry's projects	289(24.6%)	887(75.4%)	1176 (91.8%)
11	The ministry has contributed to the economic empowerment of women in my community	633(53.4%)	553(46.6%)	1186 (92.3%)
12	Discrimination of women has reduced in my community	635(54.3%)	534(45.7%)	1169(91.3%)
13	The ministry was involved in mobilizing women to participate during the 2011 elections	678(57.1%)	509(42.9%)	1187 (92.7%)
14	There are fewer destitute in my community because of the activities of the ministry	500(42.9%)	666(57.1%)	1166 (91.0%)
15	Many of the projects are handled by corrupt contractors	593(50.1%)	591(49.9%)	1184(92.4%)
16	There are still many juvenile offenders in my community	569(48.1%)	613(51.9%)	1182(92.3%)
17	The ministry projects benefit only the rich in my community	509(42.8%)	681(57.2%)	1190(92.9%)
18	Poor people do not have access to the ministry's programmes	582(48.9%)	607(51.1%)	1189(92.8%)
19	The ministry does not consult the community before implementing	548(46.1%)	640(53.9%)	1188(92.7%)
20	Sometimes the ministry plans projects but does not implement them	671(56.6%)	515(43.4%)	1186(92.6%)
21	Some of the projects executed by the ministry are irrelevant to my community	525(44.4%)	658(55.6%)	1183(92.3%)
22	A member of my family has benefited from at least one of the programmes listed above	526(44.6%)	653(55.4%)	1179(90.0%)
23	The projects executed by the ministry are a waste of tax payers' money	414(35.1%)	766(64.9%)	1180(92.1%)
24	There are still many children begging on the streets in my community	699(59.3%)	480(40.7%)	1179(92.0%)
25	Ogun State cannot do without the Ministry of Women Affair and Social Development	671(56.3%)	520(43.7%)	1191(93.0%)

Source: Field Survey, 2012; Ntiwunka, 2013.

The remaining data on respondents' perception on the activities of the Ministry of Women Affairs in Ogun State are displayed on Table 1 above. Six hundred and nineteen (51.8%) of the respondents had not greatly benefited from any of the programmes offered by the ministry, had not greatly benefited from more than one of the programmes offered (746; 63.1%), and had perceived the executed projects to be useful to their communities (78.5%). In addition, greater proportion of the respondents indicated that: The projects executed by the ministry had not contributed to peaceful or harmonious relations among people in their community and between them and the government (625; 52.9%); the projects executed by the ministry had not contributed to peaceful and harmonious relationship in their families (707; 60.3%), and that they had not been discriminated against because they participated in one of the ministry's projects (887; 75.4%). This means that Government adopts the top bottom approach by imposing projects on the people, which is why the projects made little or no impact on the community.

Furthermore, most of the respondents indicated that: The ministry had contributed to the economic empowerment of women in their communities (633; 53.4%), discrimination of women had reduced in their communities as a result of the applied programmes (635; 54.3%), and that the ministry was involved in mobilizing women to participate during the 2011 elections (678; 57.1%). Also, the majority respondents indicated that: There were many destitute in their communities despite the activities of the ministry (666; 57.1%), many of the projects were handled by corrupt contractors (593; 50.1%), and that the population of juvenile offenders had reduced in their communities (613; 51.9%).

It was also indicated that: The ministry's projects did not benefit only the rich in the respondents' communities (681; 57.2%), poor people had access to the ministry's programmes (607; 51.1%), and that the ministry consulted the community before implementing any programme (640; 53.9%). According to the foregoing table, the ministry sometimes planned projects which they did not implement (671; 56.6%), some of the projects executed by the ministry were relevant to the target communities (658; 55.6%), and members of the families of many of the respondents were yet to benefit from at least one of the programmes offered by the ministry (653; 55.4%).

It is difficult to agree with the respondents that the ministry's projects benefits the rich as well as the poor since only 48.2%, less than average, agree they have personally benefited from the projects of the ministry. The disagreement also arises as 56.6% (above average) agree that the ministry sometimes planned projects which they did not implement.

Finally, majority of the respondents indicated that: The projects executed by the ministry were not a waste of tax payers' money (766; 64.9%), there were still many children begging on the streets in their communities (699; 59.3%), and that Ogun State could not do without the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Welfare (671; 56.3%).

4. Discussion of findings

The statistical (descriptive) summary of citizens' perception of the usefulness of the various projects implemented by the understudied ministry shows a mean of 11.7400 at a standard error margin of 0.1978 on a 25 point scale. This implies that the level of perception of the relevance of the projects among the respondents is moderately low. This collective measure overrules any singular or localised indication that may put the description at a better level when looking at the matter from a state level point of view. All the programmes were beneficial to some people at some points, when the ministry is perceived as being the most active ministry in the state, but on a general note, these programmes were perceived as less serving to the needs of the people. The implication is that more efforts need to be put in place by the ministry to ensure that its programmes are more people oriented and based on the peoples' needs in line with their indications at the consultation grounds. Surveys that sample opinions about implemented and proposed programmes need to be in constant use to improve citizens' perception of the programmes and the ministries that create them.

5. Conclusion

It is an established fact that the understudied Ministry actually plans and implements programmes but these programmes have limited impact and need more publicity in order to meet their stated objectives. Citizens' perception of the usefulness of the programmes was moderately low. The leadership of the Ministry must create awareness of its programmes among the citizens. This can be done through publicity, organization of lectures at the grassroots level to educate women and children on the importance of these programmes. The Ministry from time to time should survey the opinions of the citizens about proposed and implemented programmes so as to improve citizens' perception of the programmes and the ministry that creates them.

On women empowerment, efforts should be made by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Ogun State to ensure that more women especially those in the rural areas are empowered. Women should be enlightened on the need/benefit of education, social, political and economic empowerment as it will alleviate the poverty level in the nation. Women need to be encouraged to stand up for their right and believe in themselves.

The Ministry should expedite effort to ensure that destitute are rid off the streets. Permanent rehabilitation centre ought to be established in the state. This will ensure that destitute who are not being united with their families or totally abandoned by their families have a permanent place where they can stay and be taken care of.

The state should endeavour to pass the bill to domesticate CEDAW and work hard to ensure that all forms of discrimination against women and girls are reduced to the barest minimum. Efforts should be made to ensure that bills already passed by the house such as Gender Mainstreaming Bill, Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill, Child Right Act, National Gender Policy are well implemented. Effort should also be made to ensure that more people with disabilities are empowered.

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