

COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH: DRIVING FORCE FOR SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract- Reflection on the Nigerian Government experiences in rural development showed that not much has been achieved. There exists a sharp contrast between policy formulation and its implementation. The main objective of this study is to empirically determine the level of community involvement and participation in developmental activities in the Niger Delta rural communities, assess the impact of infrastructures on their living conditions and finally to identify the antecedents of unsustainable infrastructural facilities in the region. Survey approach was used to obtain data from six communities across 3 oil producing states in the region using a total of 300 questionnaires. The findings revealed that community inputs and interest are not put into consideration by the government (NDDC) in designing and implementation of developmental projects particularly in the area of infrastructure. In the same vein, there is a lack of community interest and needs in projects identification and execution. However, the paper has offered an insight and understanding on the relevance of community driven developmental approach for successful implementation and sustainability of infrastructures especially in rural communities.

Keywords- Community; development approach; sustainable infrastructural development; rural communities

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, infrastructures plays significant role in sustainable growth and effective functioning of any society. Currently, the global demand on sustainable infrastructures across countries has spurred the actions of government and non-governmental agencies in their approach towards adequate provision of infrastructural facilities (Salleh & Siang, 2007). This serves as a driving force for socio-economic development and improved standard of living (Fuseni & Kemp, 2015). The move was reinforced by the recent United Nations 17 points agenda for sustainable development goals that emanated from the Millennium development goals which emphasized on the need for sustainable cities and communities.

Recognising the vital role infrastructure plays in nation building, countries across the globe especially in developing nations have intensified their efforts in infrastructural development by increasing their level of capital investment in infrastructural projects (Diugwu, Mohammed, & Baba, 2015). Studies (Agbaje & Kufoniyi, 2005; Bhattacharya, Romani, & Stern, 2012) have indicated that despite the huge investment in infrastructure, most countries globally are still experiencing infrastructural deficiencies and sustainability. The African Infrastructure Development Index (AIDI) indicates that over 50% of investment by African nations is spent on infrastructural development; however, most Africa countries with all her natural endowments are characterised by poor living conditions and ranked very low in regards to adequate availability of infrastructure (AIDI, 2013). Similarly, Ondiege,

Moyo and Audrey (2013) noted that Africa is rated very low amongst other nations of the world in terms of adequate and quality infrastructure.

Nigeria, being one of the Africa Nations though blessed with so much natural and human resources, yet still experiencing infrastructural deficiency and decay (Ogbole & Ojonemi, 2012). This situation is evident in the Niger Delta region located in the south-south geo-political zones of Nigeria. The region due to the huge deposits of natural resources contributes over 99% to Nigeria foreign exchange in both oil and gas (Obi, 2014; Ojo, 2012). Subsequently, the activities of oil multinationals have altered the natural environment of the oil producing communities in the area. This situation is evident in the environmental degradation and pollution with its resultant effect on loss of their homes, livelihood and inaccessibility to basic infrastructural facilities (Agbiboa, 2013; Duru & Ogbonnaya, 2012).

The Nigerian government in its effort to improve the living conditions of the rural people established various developmental boards to address these issues of provision of infrastructures. One of such boards is the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The main target of the NDDC is basically infrastructural and human development. Nevertheless, studies (Omadjohwoefe, 2011; Oluduro, & Oluduro, 2012; Eneh, 2011) indicates that most of the infrastructural projects are not sustained. In the same way, Akpomuvie (2011) observed that the infrastructural development in the Niger Delta region does not reflect in the lives of the rural communities. Likewise Abiona and Bello (2013) remarked that most of the infrastructural projects

executed by the government in the rural communities are unsustainable due to inadequate collaboration with stakeholders in developmental initiatives and implementation. Also, Okolo (2014) identified lack of community based initiatives as one of the impediments to effective infrastructural development in the region. While Kadafa, Zakaria, and Othman (2012), attribute infrastructural decay in the region to lack of adequate maintenance by communities and developmental agencies.

Furthermore, Buccus, Hicks and Piper(2008) argued that sustainable infrastructural projects is attainable when local communities are adequately integrated and given the opportunity to make decisions in developmental initiatives. These studies clearly indicate the need for community based development that recognises the views and contributions of local communities in decisions that affects their lives positively. This is based on the belief that community members are vast and knowledgeable about their immediate environment (Eversole, 2012). Thus, the primary objective of this study is to empirically determine the level of community involvement and participation in developmental activities in the Niger Delta rural communities, the impact of infrastructures on their living conditions and finally to identify the antecedents of unsustainable infrastructural facilities in the region.

II. COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The need to involve community members in designing possible methods and approaches through the use of local based knowledge and resources in fostering development is becoming a major area of interest to researchers, policy makers and development agencies across the globe. The basic concept of Community Driven Development (CDD) centres on how community members can harness available resources within their reach through collaboration for the overall development of their community (Elekwa & Eme, 2013). Similarly, Seyfang and Longhurst (2013) opine that community driven development involves the process whereby community are able to explore, examine and evaluate opportunities and challenges within their immediate environment and taking collective decision in resolving such issues for the betterment of their community. The idea of CDD is the ability of community members to be involved in identification, designing, execution, evaluation and monitoring of projects within their communities. However, Foo, Asenova, Bailey and Hood (2011) argue that such actions are viable when the community members are given the platform and opportunity to operate. Based on this assumption, the study therefore proposed the adoption of community driven development that emphasizes active participation of community

members in the identification process, decision making and implementation of developmental initiatives

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria. Survey approach was used to obtain data in six communities across 3 oil producing states in the region using a total of 300 questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to farmers, fishers, traders, community leaders and traditional leaders. Descriptive analysis through the use of SPSS was adopted for analysis of the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

The study used six (6) communities in the Niger Delta region comprising of Akassa, Afiesere, Bonny, Koko, Oloibiri and Omok. Fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed to each of the 6 communities, out of which 45(15.8%) were fully returned and completed in Akassa community, Afiesere 48(16.9%), Bonny 45(16.9%), Koko 50(17.7%), Oloibiri 48(16.9%) while Omok 48(16.9%) as reflected in Table 1 (see Appendices). While Table 2, 3, 4 and 5 shows the descriptive statistics obtained from the survey (All Appendices are removed from the text and attached for brevity and ease of reference). Questions were asked based on the level of impact of infrastructural projects on living condition of community members, level of projects executed, level of community engagement in project planning and execution and whether projects executed are community oriented as reflected in the appendices.

4.2 Findings

From the study's finding, 35% of the respondents strongly disagree that the infrastructures in their communities have not improved on their living condition. The study also shows lack of commitment by government on execution of infrastructure where 21% of the respondents indicated that most of the projects were abandoned. Subsequent 38% admitted that community members are not actively involved in the planning and executions of projects in their various communities. Finally, 98% noted that the projects executed in the region are not in line with community needs and aspiration as clearly shown in Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

4.3 Discussion and Implication

From the result of the descriptive statistics based on the respondents' opinions and views, it is evident that community inputs and interest are not put into consideration by the NDDC in designing and implementation of developmental projects particularly in the area of infrastructure. This approach by the NDDC can be attributed to one of the

major causes of unsustainable infrastructural development in the Niger Delta region. This study supports the findings of Aghalino (2012) and Agwu (2013) that identified lack of adequate collaboration as one of the factors impeding on sustainable infrastructural development in the Niger Delta. Similarly, a study by Aksorn and Charoenngam (2015) conducted in Thailand identified lack of participation of rural people as one of the factors affecting sustainability of developmental projects in rural communities.

Further findings from the study also noted lack of commitment on project implementation by government and developmental agencies. This is reflected in the result where majority of the respondents claimed that 21.1% of the infrastructural projects in the region were abandoned. This finding is in agreement with the study of Diugwu, Mohammed and Baba (2015); Olatinwo (2013) and Ocheni (2012). They identified abandonment and poor evaluation of projects by government as factors militating against infrastructural development sustainability in rural areas in Nigeria. This suggests that there is lack of commitment of government towards sustainability of infrastructures for rural development. However, studies (Rogers, Duraiappah, Antons, Munoz, Bai, Fragkias, & Gutscher, 2012) have shown that infrastructural development is a prerequisite for socio-economic growth and well-being of members of communities but this has not been given adequate attention by Nigerian government. It is noted that the impact of such projects can only be felt when the local people are adequately involved through community based participatory approach that creates opportunity for community members to contribute and make decisions in the formulation and implementation stages of developmental initiatives (Zanna 2015; Lazarus, Naidoo, Williams, Demas & Filander, 2014).

Therefore, there are plausible empirical evidences that identified community based participatory approach for conflict resolution and peace building, community development sustainability in Nigeria. However, little empirical studies have been done on how community driven development approach can be used as a driving force for sustainable infrastructural development in the Niger Delta. Based on the above findings, a clarion call is made for the adoption of community driven development approach in the designing and implementation of infrastructural projects across rural communities in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The study has offered an insight and understanding on the relevance of community driven developmental approach for successful implementation and

sustainability of infrastructures especially in rural communities where the organisational structure and system of operations are better understood by the local dwellers. Similarly, it also revealed that development is termed to be meaningful when there is a significant impact on the environment and well-being of the people. Finally, the views by the respondents indicate a lack of community interest and needs in projects identification. The study is limited by the use of descriptive analysis technique which does not provide detailed information and analysis about the issues been addressed. Based on this, future research is needed to evaluate the level of sustainable infrastructure not only in the Niger Delta but also across other non-oil producing communities in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that policy makers, developmental agencies and government should adopt Community Driven Participatory Action Plan approach in developmental initiatives especially in the identification and implementation stages of projects within communities. This will help to increase community participation and commitment to infrastructural projects sited in their communities which is one of the key factors that guarantees sustainability of projects in the form of security and maintenance.

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APPENDICES

Table 1: Percentage responses of the questionnaire Returned

Variables	Frequency	Percent %
Akassa	45	15.8
Afiesere	48	16.9
Bonny	45	15.8
Koko	50	17.7
Oloibiri	48	16.9
Omok	48	16.9
TOTAL	284	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Table 2: Responses on whether the projects and activities of NDDC has improved the living conditions in the community

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Agree	22	7.7%
Agree	34	12.0%
Undecided	21	7.4%
Disagree	83	29.2%
Strongly Disagree	100	35.2%
TOTAL	260	91.5%
Missing	24	8.5%
TOTAL	284	100.00

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Table 3: Responses on the level of projects execution by NDDC in the community

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Complete	18	6.3%
On-going	34	12.0%
Abandoned	60	21.1%
Not completed	44	15.5%
Don't know	112	39.4%
TOTAL	268	94.4%
Missing	16	5.6%
TOTAL	284	100.00

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Table 4: Responses whether community members are allowed by NDDC involve in planning and execution of developmental programmes

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Agree	12	4.2%
Agree	34	12.0%
Don't Know	40	14.1%
Disagree	74	26.1%
Strongly Disagree	108	38.0%
TOTAL	268	94.4%
Missing	16	5.6%
TOTAL	284	100.00

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Table 5: Responses whether NDDC projects and activities are people oriented

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Strongly Agree	50	17.6%
Agree	47	16.5%
Don't Know	61	21.5%
Disagree	14	4.9%
Strongly Disagree	94	33.1%
TOTAL	266	93.7%
Missing	18	6.3%
TOTAL	284	100.00

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

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