

Community Development and Local Governments in Nigeria: a Discourse

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Abstract

This paper examined the Role and Challenges of Local Government in Community Development in Nigeria. Local government since its creation in Nigeria has been and is still involved in the process of community development which ultimately translates increased standard of living among rural dwellers. Though there is glaring evidence of serious inadequacies in basic social services and amenities to the rural community, emphasis in this regard has been placed on mobilization for sustainable community development. Research and studies have shown that local government plays a variety of roles to meet-up with the challenges of community development. The paper is made up of Introduction; Conceptual Clarification; local government and Community Development; Approaches to Community Development, challenges to community development, Conclusion and Recommendations. It concluded that local governments have not been able to play their constitutional roles, let alone making attempts at rural development due in the main to the fact that they have been emasculated by other tiers of government. It suggested the Integrated Rural Development approach in view of its comprehensiveness for sustainable rural development. The paper strongly recommended autonomy for local governments. It further canvassed fiscal and political reforms as avenues for strengthening governance in the Nigerian local government system.

Keywords:

Local government,
Community,
Development,
Governance.

Background to the Study

The interrelationship or complementary nature of these two subjects underscore their relevance and study within the broad discipline of public administration. As Institutions of critical importance, they are respectively the basic political organization, and the socio-economic activity. In view of the critical importance therefore, what affects them determine whether or not Nigeria or other third world nations develop.

Constitutionally, Local government represents the third tier of governmental organization in Nigeria - the others being the Federal and State governments. Frequently, the term "Grassroots administration" is employed as this has the additional advantage of graphically describing the location of this governmental arrangement. In reality, it is not vested with the powers and resources that it deserves. It is also ironical that the Nigerian situation negates the essence of federalism (which is decentralization) by being highly centralized. Elsewhere, where the ideals and strategies for effective development have been understood the correct way, Local government is the focus of government efforts at promoting development. It becomes obvious overtime that to effectively develop, the people must be adequately mobilized. A purposeful combination of the local (peoples) effort/energies with that of government with the objective of improving socio-economic conditions and encouraging political participation is a key factor in rural development. It represents the objective expression of the energies of mobilized rural communities in concrete and tangible projects such as roads, clinics, schools, potable water and other communal initiatives that benefit the people.

Community Development: A Historical Review.

Over the years, many concepts had been employed to describe the concept, community development. Akukwe (1996) noted that community development had been associated with such names like social education, mass education, functional education and rural constructive work. Sanders (1970) in the same vein expressed the same by noting that community development had been described as a fusion of community organization and economic development. In the traditional African milieu, there have been the processes of community reconstruction activities through communal labour and self-help efforts. In the Eastern Nigeria, it is referred to as "Olu obodo" implying community work. Aside from these informal traditional community development practices, the formal institutionalization foundation of the process was securely laid in the outcome of the social disturbances and upheavals in the British West Indies (Oji 2004).

Thus, a Royal commission was put in place to investigate and check the phenomenon. Akukwe (1991) noted that during the early 40's a new colonial and welfare Act was enacted by the British government on the administration of the colonies. After the Second World War, both the political and social agitation of the colonies heightened and thus resulting in the British government in 1947 to organize an African conference on the administration of the colonies following the advice of Creek Jones, who then was the secretary of state for the colonies.

Akukwe (1996) further noted that it was the outcome of the conference that made the British Government in 1948 become more interested in the African State under its imperial authority. At the Cambridge conference of thirty British territories, the concept came into proper usage; the conference defined the concept community development as a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with active participation and on the initiative of the community (Colonial Office, 1955:14).

Community Development:

Community development according to Ajayi (1995) is a social process by which human beings can become more competent to live with and gain some control over local conditions and the changing world. Sustainable community development cannot take place through force or order, but is most likely to happen when all actors participate and share their ideas, visions and responsibilities equally and democratically in steering and implementing their community or village development projects (Ajayi and Otuya, 2006). According to Orapin (1996), one approach in creating sustainable rural development is through giving the main actors (villagers living in the community) an equal opportunity to think and plan their own future. This underpins the need for effective leadership at the local community levels in order to harness the efforts of the rural people towards their own development.

Usually, community development programmes aim at creating awareness of rural possibilities; providing information on resources, inputs and infrastructure; deploying technical assistance; skills acquisition and development; increasing literacy levels; improving productivity and productive systems; adapting appropriate technology in agriculture; sensitizing potential volunteers and donors among other things. Ideally, most community development programmes in developing nations focus on peoples' felt needs and basic amenities such as the provision of good roads, electricity, health clinics, markets, school buildings, and farm settlements among others. These goals can only be achieved through the combined and collective efforts of all those who share the conviction that rural community development must be accorded a high priority in our drive for poverty alleviation and national self-sufficiency. To help bring a rural community to action, it is necessary for individuals and groups to provide good leadership. When good leadership is provided, the people participate voluntarily in the accomplishment of stated objectives. The approach to rural community development is always through local leaders who not only act as pioneers of projects but also help in influencing and motivating their people to action. For any rural community development to be successful, influential local leaders must be involved else they might undermine the progress of such programmes. Therefore, any agency or organization coming up with a development programme for the community must initially "clear" with these influential local leaders, a process otherwise referred to as legitimization.

It is saddening to recall that rural community development was neglected by successive governments since colonial rule in Nigeria. For instance, while the colonial government concentrated their development projects such as roads, schools, hospitals, and pipe-borne water around the major cities and built network of roads to areas where they exploited

our natural resources, the rural areas were completely left out. The post-independence governments are not equally left out in the practice of rural neglect as only communities whose sons and daughters were in government benefited from development projects otherwise referred to as “national cake”. Even where good development programmes were designed for rural areas, they most of the time failed because there were no scientific and empirical studies of the target rural communities which should guide their implementation. Since the 1980's, Nigeria and many African countries have experienced a rising wave of revolts and restiveness by some rural communities. Governments have not been able to tackle these crises because there were no reliable baseline studies on the problems of such rural people (Ovwigbo and Ifie, 2004).

The Goals and Objectives of Community Development

The goals of community development should be to improve people's productivity and enable them to participate in their social, political and economic life into the future. This would give them more confidence in managing their own affairs and help to protect their environment. Indeed it is morally binding on the local government managers to do everything possible to achieve the goals. (Odiong 2003).

Every community is made up of both the individual as well as the house hold which shares the collective “we” feeling and thus, works cooperatively to attain self-fulfilment in the area of growth and development in all ramifications. As a corollary, it is a place where ideally comprehensive services of both socio-economic political and human development can be provided by the people especially with the aid of either government or unofficial bodies. Because we find peace, joy, love, happiness etc in the community where we live, it therefore follows that all and sundry should participate in order to advance their social organization. In the light of the above, the principal objective of community development is for human, material and infrastructural development through effective mobilization of both human and material resources and by the active involvement of the rural populace. Out of the four principal objectives of the 1976 local government reform, in Nigeria, two were devoted to achieving the objectives of community development viz: “To make appropriate services and initiatives by devolving or delegating them to the local representative bodies; “To mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the community in their local development”.

In line with the above, Olowu outlined the possible contributions of local government to the development process to include; political integration and nation building; Training in citizenship and political leadership; promotion of accountability, governance; and provision of social and economic development. This study however, contends that the role of local government in the community development process stands in the triadic function of

- a. As agent of mass mobilization,
- b. As accelerating force for massive economic growth and development and;
- c. Agent of socio-economic equity.

These triadic functions are not only of a great essence but also a sine-qua-non for sustainable community development. It is therefore safe to anchor every other function in the above trinity role of local government in community development.

Theories of Community Development

Some development theories inform the community development (CD) practice. This chapter discusses the relevant CD theories and concepts that have, over the years, guided the CD practice. Some of the relevant theories that will be discussed include the centre-periphery theory, the diffusion theory, the growth pole theory and the decentralization theory. It is also important that readers of this chapter understand some concepts that are relevant to the CD practice. Thus, the concepts that will be examined include the notion of CD, participation, empowerment and mobilization, and how they inform one another in terms of practice. The roles of the state and non-state actors in CD are also discussed.

Centre-Periphery Theory

The theory indicates development contradiction and/or structural differentiation between spatial settlement of the centre which is also term as the “metropolis” and the less developed countries - the “periphery”. One of the core values of the concept is that the global economy is characterized by a structured relationship between economic centres which rely on political, and trade relations to extract the economic surplus from the subordinate, peripheral countries. This theory emphasizes the exploitation of the south from the north. Nigeria's relations with, for example, the United States of American (USA) and Britain in which structural differences produce unequal development exemplify this development paradigm in terms of the relationship between the north and the south. It is important to state that this development paradigm is also relevant in explaining development patterns in a country in terms of urban-rural divide. Hence for many studies and CD practitioners, the concern on centre-periphery paradigm “has been to assess whether there is convergence or divergence in development between the centre and the periphery and the factors associated with the 'success' of core regions or the atypical success-stories in peripheral areas.” The strength of this theory lies on the fact that well endowed regions will have the opportunity to develop further if they are able to marshal the economic power that they have to take advantage of the resources of other regions. There are two main weaknesses of the theory. First, it discourages competitions among spatial regions and allows the state to take total control of the distribution of resources for development. Second, the relative economic advantages of the centre serve as the pull factors thereby encouraging migration from the periphery to the core. This phenomenon certainly comes with its attendant problems.

The Diffusion Theory

Diffusion is the process by which members of a certain community adopt an innovation. The idea of the theory is to change the backward mindset posture of enclosed typical rural communities for development through innovative means. This is supposed to lead to community acceptance of innovative ideas in disciplines spanning from agriculture to marketing. In other words, development takes place through innovative diffusion. Yates

(2001) traces the chain of reactions that is required in adopting an innovation. He states that:

[T]here are four factors that influence adoption of an innovation. These include 1) the innovation itself 2) the communication channels used to spread information about the innovation, 3) time, and 4) the nature of the society to whom it is introduced.

This chain of reactions places some responsibilities on CD practitioners. First, CD practitioners should be concerned about the social and cultural feasibilities of their proposed innovative ideas and projects. Second, CD practitioners must actively encourage the use of local resources and communication packages in disseminating the innovative ideas and projects. Also, whether the society is urban or rural will also affect how the innovative ideas or projects are disseminated. The main advantage of this theory is that it attacks conservatism and encourages conservative regions/districts/communities to develop. On the other hand, its main disadvantage is that it discourages the sustainability of endogenous knowledge systems and institutions. There might be collective interest to preserve some indigenous beliefs and systems which are serious targets of innovative ideas and projects.

The Growth Pole Theory

The Growth Pole Theory engenders spread effect in the hierarchy of development. The theory induces development in specialized designated areas – poles with spread benefits to peripheral districts. The theory “assumes that growth does not appear everywhere at the same time, but it manifests itself in “points” or “poles” of growth with variable intensity and spreads through different channels with variable terminal effects on the whole of the economy” (Perroux, 1950). It was believed that beneficial “spread effects” from growth poles would eventually induce development in the remaining peripheral areas, and that they would have a significant relay function in the process of innovation diffusion through the urban hierarchy. It is important to stress the “functional character” of the theory in that the spatial qualities of the theory are obvious such that the cities, towns and locations that serve as growth poles are able to encourage developments in other areas.

Decentralization

Decentralization is a process of sharing power between the central government on one hand, and the regional and local governments on the other such that the central government transfers power, functions, competencies, and means to the regional and local governments at the grassroots. Given the participatory nature of decentralization, CD is central to the practice of decentralization in Ghana since 1988. In establishing the interconnection between participatory governance and decentralization, Kokor (2001: page) notes that local governance: [S]ought to establish participatory democracy in which the citizens of a locality act directly in the process of both local governance and development. The central theme and driving force of the programme was that of decentralization within which two objectives directly are: 1. Create opportunity for the majority of rural Nigerians, in the villages and towns to take part in collective decision making and gain access to political authority. 2. Promote local development with the

involvement of the people as a special preoccupation to improve living conditions in the country.

Local Government

Local government is defined as government, by popularly elected bodies, charged with the administration and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place (Appadorai, 1975).

Agagu (1997) conceives the local government as a government at the grassroots level of administration meant for meeting peculiar needs of the people. In his analysis, he viewed local government as a level of government which is supposed to have its greatest impact on the people of the grassroots.

Local Government and Rural Development

The local government is essentially created as a viable political and administrative organ for the transformation of all communities and for delivery of essential services to the citizens. The primary purpose of the local government and the basis for its existence is to create a mass development impetus to the grassroots transformation (Adeyemo, 1995).

Importantly, the local government is also to act as the training ground for a higher level of administration and for the inculcation of the philosophy of people-oriented development. Its capacity is to act as training ground for breeding the grassroots democracy and act as a catalyst for national development, which cannot be over emphasized (Adeyemo, 1995).

It, therefore, provides political education that ensures direct participation at the grassroots level in the issues that directly affect their lives. The closeness of local administration to the people affords them the opportunity to meet with their local representative, one on one, and present their problems for possible and immediate solutions. This may not be possible at the other level of governments because of the distance and administrative bottlenecks. Essentially, the local government is saddled with the responsibility of guaranteeing the political, social, and economic development of its area and its people (Enero, Oladoyin, & Elumilade, 2004)

The local government, being the government nearest to the rural populace, is one of the best institutions for generating motivation and encouraging mobilization for self-help, as well as inducing the much needed wider participation of the local population in the decision-making process at the local level. It is estimated that rural local governments account for about 80 percent of the entire Nigeria population, and it is plausible to argue as pundits do, that the so-called third world is a rural world where any meaningful discussion of rural development really means not only talking of overall national development, but also because it is in the rural areas that the problem of inequitable distribution of resources or a marked lack of purchasing power and of grinding poverty in which the wretched members of society stagnate and stare one in the face with brutal clarity.

To guarantee the satisfaction of basic social needs, therefore, local responsibility and co-operation must be encouraged and that can best be developed through the participation of the local citizenry, not only in the affairs of their local government, but also in their own community affairs. It is important to observe that the existence of the third tier system of government in Nigeria should at least, halt the deteriorating living conditions in the rural areas of this country. An effective local government will be better disposed than the state or federal governments not only to stem the grim reality of the “rising tide of rural poverty”, but also better placed to evoke the spirit of “local co-operation”, thereby being more able to galvanize and mobilize the support of local citizenry in participating in all the programmes that may affect them.

Approaches to Community Development:

Basic Resource Approach

Adopted during Colonial administration, the approach assumed that development is a function of the existence, magnitude and quality of natural resources. Hence the exploitation and development of the natural resources automatically create large investment capital and increases economic activities which facilitate employment and income generation.

It also posits that areas endowed with basic natural resources should expectedly grow faster than less endowed areas and also hasten the process of rural development. This argument is however faulted on the premise that there are areas abundantly endowed with basic natural resources which have continued to stagnate especially in Nigeria. This however adds the dimension of availability of competent labour force and committed leadership which are sine qua non for achieving sustainable rural development and economic development through this approach.

Growth Centre Approach

It is an offshoot and an extension of the Basic Resource Approach. Growth centres correspond to colonial urban centres/townships. They are centres to which goods, services and ideas flow. The argument here is that growth does not occur everywhere at the same time. They start at growth poles and the intensification of economic activities from this growth centre creates expansion and linkage effects to the hinterland. The spread effect of food production for rural and urban industrial markets, raw materials for industries, employment opportunities for any surplus rural labour force, agricultural mechanization can facilitate rural development. Hence the approach advocates that in planning rural development programmes, growth centres should be deliberately and strategically created to speed up and even out development across a wider space, but the backwash effect of migrating rural labour and finance to urban centres should be avoided in order to allow for trickling down or diffusion effect of development.

Export-Led Growth Approach

This is a colonial administration initiative built around producing cash crops for exports. It is expected that through this approach, the rural areas will be opened up and linked through infrastructural facilities. The logic in this approach is that the opening into world

markets resulting from international demand for products of the developing economies will eventually galvanise resource utilization and capacity building of the hitherto dormant and under-utilised resources and potentials. This explains the development of various ports, railways, roads across the length and breadth of Nigeria. Through this approach, it is expected that personal incomes, employment and government revenues will increase.

Diffusion Model

The approach assumes that there are differences in agricultural practices and that these differences account for the success or otherwise of farmers. The thrust of the model is that innovations to farmers require re-orientation and habituation made possible through communication and other support services. Farmers need to be educated on the application of modern techniques, equipment, improved seeds and inputs. Farmers appreciate these modern innovations in terms of its concept, application and gains when they are practically exposed to same. The approach emphasizes the need for administrative framework in ensuring availability and timely delivery of new inputs to farmers. It also underscores the existence of credit facilities in tackling funds problem or inadequacy in adapting to innovations. The role of Demonstration/ Experimental farms, agricultural extension agents/officers, and credit facilities to farmers and research institutions in encouraging local adaptive methods cannot be overemphasized in this approach to rural development.

Basic Needs Approach

It assumes that the rural population requires certain basic human facilities which are essentially social in character. Such facilities include hygienic water supply, functional health facilities and institutions, access roads, electricity, decent housing, good and qualitative education, communication facilities. As a concept, this approach seeks to relate development to the socio-cultural and economic realities of the rural populace. It seeks to identify practical socio-economic and cultural constraints to the welfare and development of the rural people and formulating/executing plans to eliminate these constraints.

It is a more contemporary approach to rural development as manifested in governments preference for it through the establishment of ADPS, RBRDAS, DFRRRI. Through these various programmes, government has applied the principles embedded in this approach in its determination or efforts in realizing reasonable development in rural areas on a continuing basis.

Integrated Rural Development

The underlying argument in this approach is that previous attempts/approaches to rural development failed due to lack of integration. In reaction to the deficiencies associated with single project approach to rural development, the integrated rural development approach became inevitable. It is multi-sectoral, multi-project approach to rural development in which agriculture, infrastructure and industry support and reinforce one another. IRD sees rural development in its totality. It is a programme that captures and

recognizes the essence of all human and material factors relevant to rural development as well as their positive and negative potentials in rural development goals and implementation. The approach attempts to resolve some policy contradictions and conceptual problems (paradox) of the past and previous approaches which yielded little or no results. IRD assumes that rural development produces positive results and it is desirable; success at rural development is measurable and measured in terms of maximum material goodness; and enhanced material goodness is equal to increased quality of life.

A meaningful rural development programme must involve multiple objectives, be multisectoral and must integrate organisations and institutions to achieve the fullest realization of the benefits of efforts and investment in the programme. Note the vital role of integrating objectives, policies and programmes. The role of Non-Governmental Organisations and Community Based Organisations must be harmonised. Bottom-top approach to rural development must be emphasized to achieve results using this approach to rural development.

Sectoral Integration:- The need to link agriculture to industry, education, health, infrastructure in order to achieve results and rural development goals and comprehensive/balanced development is of utmost significance.

Organisational Integration:- It entails collaboration and coordination of various institutional or Natural groups involved in rural development such as Governmental units and agencies, Nongovernmental associations e.g. social clubs, improvement unions, Quasi-governmental bodies for example, NDE, Cooperative and Agricultural Banks.

Using the holistic approach, the collective roles of all stakeholders and actors in rural development is explicable in the light of organizational systems approach. The need for coordination and interdependence among all levels and tiers of government cannot be over emphasized. The activities of NGOs, CBOs, MNCs, private and public organisations or agencies, social clubs, religious and charitable organisations come into focus and must be effectively harmonised to achieve goals/objectives in implementing rural development programmes for sustainable results.

The systems approach provides solution to the problems of overlapping jurisdiction and conflicts resulting from the concurrent functions of rural development among tiers and levels of government as well as those of the non-governmental agencies. Being basically concerned with problems of relationships, structure and interdependence, systems theory can successfully remedy most of these conflicts and jurisdictional overlaps.

Challenges Local Governments in Nigeria Face in Community Development

Several obstacles combine to hinder the effective participation of local government in community development. These factors include:

General poverty

The generality of the rural populace in Nigeria lives below the poverty line and thus, lives in hunger and starvation. If the popular dictum that "a hungry man is an angry man" is true, then such a man will be impervious to all gospel of mobilization towards community development. A man who cannot feed himself, or better still not feed well, may lack the capacity for rational thinking and can hardly perform his civil rights of paying tax as well as effectively participate in decision making e.t.c.

Inadequate Financial Resources

Most of the local governments in the Nigeria are not financially buoyant to effectively participate in community development programme. The joint state-local government account has not helped matter as the latter is always at the caprice and whim of the former. There is glaring evidence of undue state interference in the financial resources of many local governments to the extent that the average local council finds it difficult to meet its recurrent expenditure not to talk more of executing capital projects.

Inadequate Use of Grassroots Institutions

Adequate use of Grassroots Institutions in Local organizations is a necessary, if not a sufficient condition for accelerated development which emphasizes improvement in the productivity and welfare of the majority of the rural people [Literature on Western Development, quoted in Olowu: 27]. Before the advent of Colonialism with its attendant social change, various Nigerian communities have through self-help effort using such Grassroots Institutions as the Age grade, the Umu- the Town Unions, the Masquerade group [usually an enforcement agent], the Religious groups , etc, to developed themselves. Grassroots Institutions are in no doubt a great force to be reckoned with especially when harnessed well and channelled in the right direction in the realization of community development objectives. They possessed a quantum of both human, material and to an extent, financial resources which yearns to be tapped and in the right direction for optimum result. It therefore behoves on the practitioners to systematically integrates and utilize these grassroots institutions as a way of attaining sustainable community development

Autonomy

Autonomy simply refers to freedom, independent, free from external and remote control. The 1976 reforms, provided for a third tier of government, making local government a tier of government i.e a unit of government, independent from other units. The 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognised local government as the third tier of government. Section 7(1) of 1979 constitution. The autonomy of local government as clearly established by 1976 reform guidelines and the 1979 constitution over the years continue to be a mirage, because of the extent to which other tiers of government intrude in local government affairs. There are situations where Governors of state, unconstitutionally dissolves the entire elected council's officers and replace them with caretaker committee.

This development has made local government an appendage of state or an object of control by state. It is a major challenge of local government administration, because local governments wait to take directives from state instead of carrying out self-initiatives for the development of local government areas. Again, the practice of local government funds or allocation passing through state joint account is a serious impediment to local government and posed a challenge to its task of providing social and economic amenities for its populace or people. The ungodly joint account paves way for the state government to dictates to local government and again divert huge sum of the funds meant for Local government to other things entirely. Again, the practice of approval of byelaws made by the local government legislative council by state legislature renders the concept of autonomy of local government futile, since there is no element of independence and freedom of legislation.

Financial Challenges

Local government source of finance is through either federation account or statutory allocation and internally generated revenue. Statutory allocation comes from federal government and the state government is supposed to augment the efforts of federal government by giving 10% of their internal generated revenue to local government. The problem faced by local government is that, the statutory allocation by federal government is delayed, not given on time. When it is released, it passed through state joint account and problems are compounded. Even the 10% the state supposes to give to local government is not given. This posed a serious challenge to local government administration, because no administration can achieve its goals without funds, and local governments funds are delayed and hijacked by both upper tier of government. Again, the internally generated revenue of local government which is supposed to sustain local government is mismanaged and misappropriated by those in positions. Revenue collectors print their receipt nowadays and use for their selfish interest instead of using local government authorized receipts. This corrupt practices continued unabated because, people in high places also benefit from this ugly rooting of local government funds.

Unskilled Workers

Local government in Nigeria are faced with the problem of inadequate skilled workers such as engineers, accountants, medical Doctors, town planners, statisticians etc Reasons for this ugly development are that, there is a very low image of local government in the minds of these professionals. Again, there is lack of job satisfaction that can keep them in the local government. Most skilled and qualified personnel and professionals prepare to gamble their luck either in private organisations or establish their own firms rather than stay at the local government where there are no incentives and be wasted away. This have made local governments to be surviving on unskilled labour, some are diploma and certificate holders who cannot defend the certificates they hold. This situations is a great challenge to local government efficiency, people who don't know their left and right in what they does can hardly be productive and effective.

Priority Misplacement

Priority is what is considered most, urgent or first before others, A hungry man's priority should be eating food and not drinking alcohol. If you drink alcohol, you will still be hungry and it will amount to misplacement of priority. The challenge of local government administration in Nigeria particularly nowadays is priority misplacement. Most council chairmen instead of carrying out projects that would have direct bearing on the lives of their people, embarked on projects that satisfy their selfish ends. For instance, instead of digging bore holes to provide potable water, a council chairman is busy building a stadium or local government guest house, because he is a sport lover.

Indiscipline

This refers to being disobedient; indiscipline has to do with low moral behaviours. Staff of local authorities, from senior to junior cadre has various forms of indiscipline. Most senior officers of local authorities hardly come to work and when they come, they behave as if their offices bites them, they stay under shades and gossip, and the junior staff play the truancy even more, staking the effectiveness of local councils. Most local councils today, you can only see staff when there is allocation, immediately it is disbursed, everyone will get his or her share and call it a day till next month. This situation spells doom for local government administration and poses a serious challenge to local authorities. Immoral behaviours among staff make them to believe that, government business is no man's business and abandon the rules that guide moral conduct and professional ethics. Official functions are seen as an extension of private life which can be done at will. This attitude has drastically affected the performance of local government councils in Nigeria.

Again, the people whom local government is established to serve are in most cases not involved in decisions that affect them directly. The result of this is that, the rural inhabitants lack interest in whatever the local government does for them.

Conclusion

Generally, local government administration in Nigeria has all it takes to provide the needed developmental apparatus as it affects persons living in the rural areas and the local communities in particular. It is pertinent to state at this juncture, that both the federal and state governments should shed their direct involvement and financial expenditure in favour of local government. Rather the two tiers of government should only allocate funds for the use of local government and leave the latter to run its own programmes with minimal over-sight function. The issue of Joint State Local Government Account should be abrogated. All the control measures and mechanisms put in place by both the States and States Houses of Assembly should be reduced to allow the local government authorities in Nigeria focus on concrete developmental programmes devoid of incessant interruption.

Recommendations

The challenges facing local government in community development process are many and have led to the advancement of many solutions by other experts in the field. Therefore, the under listed suggestions are not absolute and sacrosanct.

- a. Steady improved economic growth and developments through the provision of rural infrastructure, other basic necessity of life and good governance to enable the rural masses cope with the problem of poverty and thus perform their civic obligation
- b. Equitable distribution or re-distribution of common wealth through the instrument of distributive and regulatory public policy
- c. Provision of sufficient fund by the other two higher tiers to the local government as well as the local government diversifying her revenue base through taxation, levies and rates.
- d. Attitudinal change through value re-orientation of both the leaders and the led, especially with regards to government work, property and public life. The current perception of government work and property as no mans business must be discouraged at all cost and more drastic punishment should be given to the offenders. The current anti-graft agencies such as the EFCC, ICPC etc., are all moribund and like a toothless bulldog, they can only bark but not bite. There is therefore the need for an overhauling of the system in other to produce a functional and effective control mechanism.
- e. Effective and efficient dissemination of information and the use of propaganda to sensitize and arouse the interest of the rural masses in community developments. Information is power and thus, vital in all human dealings. Without effective information and subsequent dissemination, the ruralites may not be aware of the benefits of community development. As Olowu noted, "there is no limit to the sacrifices that people are willing to make when they understand that they themselves would be the final beneficiaries. Hence community unions and cooperative associations have proved effective and successful again and again in raising the resources to finance important projects where many are centrally-dominated local governments have failed"[1988:21]
- f. The use of grassroots institution: Effective use of grassroots institution is one of the most viable solutions to the challenges of sustainable community development. Such institutions like the town union, the age-grade, the women's wing, the traditional rulers abroad unions, the philanthropic group etc. are all grassroots institution that when effectively mobilize, can create significant impact in the process of community development. The Dasuki report equally emphasized on the importance of grassroots institutions in community development. The local government should therefore, avail itself the opportunity by harnessing the forces of these institution and guiding them into a constructive positive channel for optimum result. The hitherto failure and un sustainability of community development projects and programmes in Nigeria is hardly unconnected with the top-down approach which makes the target recipients, including

the grassroots institutions more of passive than active participant. It is therefore believed that the use of grassroots institutions will not only makes the people active participants and thus a feeling of partners in progress but equally enhances the sustainability of community development projects and programmes.

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