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**STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSFORMATION OF RURAL
COMMUNITIES IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

**IGE, Lawrence Olusola
AMUSA, Dare Rilwan
Department of Adult Education
University of Lagos, Nigeria.
lawige@unilag.edu.ng**

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IGE, Lawrence Olusola
AMUSA, Dare Rilwan

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Abstract

The process of development is not complete if all sectors be it the formal or informal sector of the society has not contributed their quota to the economy. In the same vein, until everyone contributes their quota to the development, the cycle is not completed yet. However, there is hierarchy in the way people contributes to the development. While some contribute immensely as the major stakeholders' others contribute passingly and their contributions may not be fully noticed. The study seeks to unravel the involvement of stakeholders, their effectiveness and challenges emanated because of their involvement in rural community transformation. The study adopted descriptive design to have a full glance of the study. Data was collected through close ended questionnaire from the stakeholders in different sectors in Ogun state. Two hundred and ten (210) respondents were selected through Purposive sampling technique to ensure stakeholders are selected from all sectors in seven local governments being one-third of the twenty local governments in Ogun state and the data were analyzed with frequency and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The study found that stakeholders' involvement in development project is not felt in all sectors, the study therefore recommended the involvement of stakeholders in major development project meant for the community.

Introduction

In the word of Peter (1996), the concept of community transformation is intended to describe significant change in a distressed community that would be clearly measurable in terms of income, employment, educational attainment, human health, environmental quality, population retention, business environment, access to capital, entrepreneurial activity, accountable governance, and civic participation. Robert Putnam and others have posited that the key to such transformation is social capital, the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Programs that address individual development, organizational development, and community development contribute to the accumulation of social capital.

An effective community transformation requires the concentrated application of a wide range of efforts in each community over a period. Therefore, there is need to attain a breadth and depth of penetration in the population to create a critical mass of social capital at which point the process should become self-sustaining. This would require a density of human resource development that has perhaps never been attempted. It would involve the coordinated application of a wide range of different types of programs serving different segments of the population as well as bridging such sectors. Such an effort would have to reach beyond the usual suspects who can be counted upon to turn out for public meetings and leadership programs. It would need to reach deep into the community with entry level programs for those who have never been involved before, whether due to socio-economic status, youth, or apathy. It would need re-entry programs for those who have participated before but dropped out, whether from age, burn-out, or alienation. It would need advanced level programs for people who have experience but need further training to become trainers themselves. It would require cooperation from government, schools, churches, the business community, and community-based organizations. Perhaps most challengingly it will require everyone to give up the prospect of getting credit if the venture succeeds, and allow success to be its own reward.

The development of rural areas as the bedrock of rural transformation has long been neglected in Nigeria with the ascendancy of crude oil as the mainstay of the nation's economy. The rural dwellers produced the chunk of Nigeria's staple foodstuffs, using crude implement and technology. The task of transforming rural-Nigeria has remained the focus of successive governments in recent years. Consequently, they have implemented numerous rural development programmes such as operation feed the nation (1976), green revolution (1979), a directorate of foods, roads and rural infrastructure (1986), the national directorate of employment (1986), better life programme (1989), family support programme, national poverty eradication programme etc. that have largely failed to achieve their set goals and objectives. (Nnaemeka-Okeke, 2016) and Kawu, (2013) argued that government cannot exclusively alleviate the impact of unplanned urban growth and therefore there is a need for the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the development.

Stakeholders refer to people or organisations that have a "stake" in a matter, by being either involved in or influenced by it through their sponsorship. In the rural development policy context, this covers all the groups concerned with policy delivery from the policymakers and local administrators to the (potential) project beneficiaries. Given that rural development directly affects the quality of food, water, energy, leisure, biodiversity and other services, there is a sense in which it concerns everybody. However, when considering stakeholder engagement in rural development policy, it is more helpful to categorise people into groups to understand how their engagement can take place and what it can specifically contribute. Substantial evidence suggests that reciprocal relationship between stakeholders increases their participation in rural development projects because they provide a platform for new relationships to be developed in addition to the existing ones and they learn to appreciate the legitimacy of each other's views (Forester, 1999; Leeuwis & Pyburn, 2002). This makes the collaboration of stakeholders necessary for sustainability and the implementation of decisions to be addressed effectively.

Vanguard Newspaper of December 18, 2018, reported how stakeholders emphasize need for infrastructural development to enhance national development. The stakeholders who gathered at the maiden edition of the Nigerian Infrastructure Development Awards NIDA, held in Lagos emphasized the need for rapid infrastructural development across the country to ensure national development. The stakeholders pointed out that infrastructural development is very critical to the development of the nation, stressing however, that it is one thing to have infrastructure, but it is another thing to develop it to the benefit of the nation. They therefore called on private and public sector players in infrastructure segment of the national economy to come together to take infrastructure development to global level, pointing out that Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind in the quest for infrastructure development as obtainable globally.

In the opinion of the writer, The Guardian Newspaper of September 5, 2021 where stakeholders are highlighting the importance of peace, unity in nation-building. The stakeholders opined that countries like Nigeria, Chad, Mali, Libya, Ethiopia, and other African nations are today desperately trying to hold things together, maintain peace and prevent them from falling apart due to certain internal upheavals and self-inflicted pains. While many stakeholders and commentators have pointed out ways to remedy the situations, it would seem those saddled with governance and leadership in the geopolitical spaces either do not listen or do not have the capacity to save their countries from chaos. However, those who sue for peace in the belief that it is much better than strife, have not ceased from doing so.

In the same vein, the stakeholders have been very active in various cycle of life in Ogun state ranging from Education, health, agriculture, sport etc which means that the stakeholder's role cannot be under-emphasized in the community. However, one of the arguments that has been used to justify stakeholders' participation is that it results in a strong sense of ownership over the process and outcomes achieved (Reed, 2008). As rural development projects are how

government, development institutions, and non-government organizations (NGOs) deliver a range of services to alleviate rural poverty and raise awareness, it is important to look at the available best practices in stakeholder participation.

Statement of the Problem

Development and transformation work hand in hand, the development of rural areas will bring transformation to the rural area. The place of rural transformation in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized given the fact that most of the Nigerian people resides in the rural-Nigeria and its importance to the lives of rural dwellers and growth of the national economy. Thus, rural transformation is 'sine qua non' to national development. Consequent upon this, both past and present administrations have mounted and are still evolving series of programmes and policies geared towards transforming rural Nigeria. But despite these arrays of rural development programmes, Nigerian rural communities are yet to attain the desired transformation. These developments have called for various stakeholders' intervention in the transformation process in different sphere of life. Even though, some people believe that the involvement of stakeholders would bring about conflict role in the society as their involvement would result in a strong sense of ownership over the process and outcomes achieved. These propelled the interest of the researcher to look at the stakeholders' involvement in transformation of rural communities in Ogun state.

Purpose of the study

The general objective of the research is to assess the stakeholders' involvement in transformation of rural communities in Ogun state. The specific objectives are to:

1. assess stakeholders' involvement in rural community transformation in Ogun state.
2. determine the effectiveness of stakeholders' involvement in rural community transformation in Ogun state.
3. identify various challenges that emanated from stakeholders' involvement in community transformation in Ogun state.

Research Questions

1. What are the roles of the stakeholders in rural community transformation in Ogun state?
2. How effective are the stakeholders' involvement in rural community transformation in Ogun state?
3. What are the challenges that emanated from the involvement of stakeholders in rural community transformation?

Research Hypotheses

H₀ 1: Stakeholders' involvement will not have any significant relationship in rural community transformation.

H₀ 2: There is no significant relationship between effectiveness of stakeholders' involvement and rural communities' transformation.

Literature Review

The concept of rural transformation according to Mabogunje (1980) in Kawu (2013) implies a broad-based reorganization and mobilization of the rural masses to cope effectively with the daily tasks of their lives and with changes consequent upon this. As stated elsewhere, rural transformation is a process of mobilizing and harnessing human and material resources of all the rural populaces with a view to improving their socioeconomic situations through qualitative and quantitative changes (Ogunnowo, 2017). In essence, rural transformation is a planned change in the living standards of the rural population and making the process of their development self-sustaining. Rural transformation is perceived as a design to improve the economic and social conditions of rural inhabitants, which must involve strategies for extending the benefits of the development of the rural majority Coker (2019). The objectives of rural transformation efforts include the elimination of poverty, creation of rural employment opportunities, the elimination of major inequalities, and ensuring adequate participation of the rural populace in the transformation process. No matter the level of a nation's socioeconomic, political, and technological advancement, the rural sector still plays an important role in its total economy.

Olayide et al (1979) in Coker (2019) contributed that rural transformation is a process whereby concerted efforts are made to facilitate significant increases in rural resource productivity with the overall objectives of enhancing rural incomes and increasing employment opportunities in rural communities. Indeed, the coverage of rural transformation is very wide; it connotes efforts to increase production, and to root out the fundamental causes of poverty, disease and ignorance. It constitutes a process of planned change for which the one approach or the other is adopted for improvement and or transformation of the lot of the rural populace. It is concerned with the improvement of the living

in the rural areas on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the socio-spatial structures of their productive activities.

According to Obinne (2011), it also involves creating and widening opportunities for individuals to realize full potential through education and share in the decision and action which affects their lives. An effort to increase rural output creates employment opportunities and roots out the fundamental causes of poverty, diseases, and ignorance. Rural transformation is perceived as a design to improve the economic and social conditions of rural inhabitants, which must involve strategies for extending the benefits of the development of the rural majority Coker (2019). A few strategies have been adopted for this process and these include agricultural development, infrastructural development, industrialization, and integrated rural development and community development in Nigeria. Rural transformation, therefore, refers to any package designed to assist the rural people to move forward. The problems have been identified and notably enough, most Nigerians live in rural areas where they derive their livelihood.

Development and Transformation

Development and transformation work hand in hand, the development of rural area will bring transformation to the rural area. The place of rural transformation in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized given the fact that most of the Nigerian people resides in the rural-Nigeria and its importance to the lives of rural dwellers and growth of the national economy. Thus, rural transformation is 'sine qua non' to national development. Consequent upon this, both past and present administrations have mounted and are still evolving series of programmes and policies geared towards transforming rural Nigeria. But despite these arrays of rural development programmes, Nigerian rural communities are yet to attain the desired transformation. Expectedly, the main objectives of these rural development programmes as reviewed by Idachaba (1985) in Coker (2019) are: (a) to increase rural income (b) to diversify rural economy (c) to raise agricultural productivity; and (d) to enhance the quality of life in the rural areas. The indices of development include Increase in per capita income measured as income per head, more even distribution of income not in the hands of a few, reduction in the level of unemployment, more employment opportunities, diversification of the economy, i.e. investment in different businesses, an increase in the supply of high level manpower, balanced development of both rural and urban centres. However, it is essential to take certain steps to bring about development in rural areas; Carrying out an informal survey on fact finding, identifying small groups, leaders and interest groups, Identification of community problem, sharing in the problems identified, securing citizens' commitment, Appraisal of available resources, Articulating the plan, carrying out and evaluation of the plan, and adjusting where necessary.

The Need for Rural Transformation in Nigeria

Effective transformation of rural communities is a prerequisite to the growth of agriculture. Thus, over the years, rural development in Nigeria had been driven by agricultural productivity, which in turn reflects greatly on the food security status of the nation. In other words, improvements in agricultural productivity form the cornerstone of rural transformation in Nigeria both in the past and recent times. This implies that intricate linkages exist between rural transformation, agricultural productivity, and national food security. The sustainability of such linkages is critical to overall national development. A Greater proportion of the rural areas are yet to be connected to the national grid for electricity supply. Even, the whole country had been experiencing recurring problems of epileptic power supply for a long time. Also, ineffective agro-based cottage industries capable of preserving harvested farm products coupled with unfriendly environmental conditions often lead to crop wastage. Whereas storage facilities serve to stabilize seasonal food supplies and prices.

Market platforms in rural areas serve as exchange points for the farmers to trade their products profitably. Once the rural farmers are constrained health wise with dearth of health services, their productivity level will decline. In the same vein, availability of safe and hygienic potable water in the rural areas will help to prevent communicable diseases. This in turn will increase farmers' output, raise the quality of life, transform rural communities, economic growth and empowerment for the rural populace, while improving farmers' level of productivity that in turn will boost national food security as well. Rural transformation strategies have become imperative for the Third World countries desirous of abandoning their present state of underdevelopment. Coker & Obo (2012) were of opinion that it has become strategic because more than 2.5 billion people on earth reside in the Third World countries, and of this number, a large percentage engage in agriculture.

Inclusion of Stakeholders into Rural Transformation

Akinmoladun and Oduwaye, (2000) submitted that the concept of participation could be perceived in different ways depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. Basically, it means the participation of the stakeholders as citizens or a group in the planning process. It is essentially the democratization of the planning process, which allows greater say and engagement to beneficiaries of the planning system. The policy makers must ensure the engagement of community in the process of formulation and implementation of and policies of the physical developments of their environments. This process involves the mobilization of both men and material resources to improve the quality of their environment. This process is described by Oyesiku (1998) in Obinne (2011) as an active process in which the person in question takes part in the contribution and implementation of decisions for the fact that the government cannot alone provide the need of the people. Oyesiku (1998) in Obinne (2011) also revealed that it is essential for the concerned community to initiate plans and execute projects that are helpful to their existence. It is only by incorporating local people in the decision-making process that the decision can be tailored to the specific needs of the people (Akinmoladun and Oduwaye, 2000).

Oyesiku (1998) in Obinne (2011) also submitted that the importance of stakeholder Engagement, through positive and pro-active partnerships with the community, business, government, and the development industry is enormous and cannot be underestimated. In Nigeria, there is a need to empower residents to advocate for their community of interest and endeavor to create policy and strategy which is respectful of their vision. It is not possible, nor realistic, to expect that the expectations of every stakeholder will be able to be met in every situation, recognizing the diverse range of ideas, backgrounds, and aspirations that stakeholders do have. It is therefore important that stakeholder Engagement is progressed in an open, transparent, responsible, and respectful manner. There are resource implications associated with stakeholder Engagement, requiring the investment of time, energy and money. In addition, there are statutory timeframes established for many decision-making processes. With limited resources, it is not realistic to expect that stakeholder Engagement will be progressed for every single development proposal.

Despite the empirical evidence of the success of stakeholder participation in the studies cited above, stakeholder participation may not yield the intended objectives if it is not properly executed. For example, Nelson and Wright (1995) emphasize that in poor stakeholder participatory processes, stakeholders may easily conclude that their involvement has no impact when it becomes clear to them, they cannot influence decisions that affect them (Duane, 1999; Handley, Griffiths, Hill, & Howe, 1998; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000) because the participatory process resembles a “talking shop” without concrete action.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive design to have a full glance of the study. Data was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire from the stakeholders in different sectors in Ogun state. The split half reliability technique was used to determine the validity and reliability of the test. Two hundred and ten (210) respondents were selected through Purposive sampling technique in seven local governments, one third of the twenty local governments in Ogun state. This was done to ensure that major stakeholders were captured and to generalised the study. Likert four-point scale was used in the questionnaire. The result was analysed with simple percentages to answer research questions raised and Pearson product moment correlation was used for hypotheses formulated at 0.05 significant level.

Data Analysis

Table 1

Research Question One: What are the roles of the stakeholders’ in rural community transformation in Ogun state?

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
The role of the stakeholders is to advise the governments on what and how to carry out any developmental project	74 (35%)	56 (26.7%)	44 (21%)	36 (17.1%)	210 (100)
Stakeholders have the right to supervise government projects	80 (38.1%)	66 (31.4%)	36 (17.1%)	28 (13.3%)	210 (100)
The stakeholders can also dictate what to do to the government	100 (47.6%)	56 (26.7%)	20 (9.5%)	34 (16.2%)	210 (100)
Stakeholders can also execute projects on their own with little support from the government	74 (35%)	70 (33.3%)	60 (28.6%)	6 (2.9%)	210 (100)

Table one shows that 130(68.3%) of the respondents agreed that the role of the stakeholders are to advise the governments on what and how to carry out any developmental project, 146(73.3%) agreed that the role of the stakeholders are to supervise government projects, 156(74.3%) of the respondents also agreed that the role of the stakeholders are to dictate what to do to the government while 144(68.6%) agreed that the role of the stakeholders are to execute projects on their own with little support from the government.

Table 2

Research Question Two: How effective are the stakeholders' involvement in rural community transformation in Ogun state?

Response	Number of Respondent	% of respondents
very effective	110	57.8
mildly effective	30	15.8
not effective	40	21
not felt	50	26.4
Total	210	100

Table two shows that 110(57.8%) of the respondent opined that stakeholder's role are very effective, 30(15.8%) of the respondents opined that the stakeholder's role are mildly effective, 40(21%) of the respondents also opined that stakeholders role are not effective at all, while 50(26.4%) of the respondents opined that stakeholders role are not felt at all.

Table 3

Research Question Three: What are the challenges that emanated from the involvement of stakeholders in rural community transformation.

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
There will be corruption when stakeholders are involved in community transformation	60 (28.6%)	56 (26.7%)	44 (21%)	50 (23.8%)	210 (100)
Role conflict may arise when stakeholders get involved in community transformation	60 (28.6%)	60 (28.6%)	56 (26.7%)	34 (13.3%)	210 (100)
Lips services paid by the government is one of the challenges of community transformation	100 (47.6%)	54 (25.7%)	20 (9.5%)	36 (17.1%)	210 (100)
There will be an introduction of partisan project when stakeholders are involved in community transformation	74 (35%)	70 (33.3%)	32 (28.6%)	34 (2.9%)	210 (100)

Table three shows that 116(55.2%) of the respondents agreed that there will be corruption when stakeholders are involved in the community transformation process, 120(57.1%) agreed that role conflict may arise when stakeholders get involved in community transformation, 154(73.3%) agreed that lips services paid by the government is one of the challenges of community transformation while 144(68.3%) agreed that there will be an introduction of partisan project when stakeholders are involved in community transformation introduction of partisan project.

Table 4

Hypotheses Testing

Stakeholders' involvement will not have any significant relationship in rural community transformation

		STAKEHOLDER'S INVOLVEMENT	COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION
Stakeholder's Involvement	Pearson correlation	1	.802**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Community Transformation	N	210	210
	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-Tailed)	.802**	1
	N	210	210

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 illustrates that the Pearson product moment correlation index obtained is positive at 'r' = 0.802. The significance or p-value = 0.000 which is less than predetermined alpha=0.05. This result indicated that stakeholders have significant role to play in rural community transformation. In conclusion. Since the null hypothesis stated is rejected, it implies that there is a significant relationship between the role of stakeholders and rural community transformation.

Table 5

Hypothesis two

There is no significant relationship between effectiveness of stakeholders' involvement and rural communities' transformation.

		STAKEHOLDER'S INVOLVEMENT	EFFECT ON COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION
Stakeholder's Involvement	Pearson correlation	1	.768**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	210	210
Effect On Community Transformation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-Tailed)	.768**	1
	N	.000	1
		210	210

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 illustrates that the Pearson product moment correlation index obtained is positive at 'r' = 0.768. The significance or p-value = 0.000 which is less than predetermined alpha=0.05. This result indicated that there is significant effect of stakeholders' involvement on community transformation. In conclusion. Since the null hypothesis stated is rejected, it implies that there is a significant effect of stakeholders' involvement on rural community transformation.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from research question one and hypothesis one show that respondents opined that the role of the stakeholders are to advise the government, supervise the government project and carry out some project on behalf of the government. This is in line with Akinmoladun and Oduwaye, (2000) submission that the concept of participation could be perceived in different ways depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. Basically, it means the participation of the stakeholders as citizens or a group in the planning process. It is essentially the democratization of the planning process, which allows greater say and engagement to beneficiaries of the planning system. Also, Oyesiku (1998) in Obinne (2011) also supported the result by describing the process as an active process in which the person in question takes part in the contribution and implementation of decisions for the fact that the government cannot alone provide the need of the people.

Findings from research question two and hypothesis two show that the stakeholder's role are effective in some people's view, the role of the stakeholder are mildly effective in some sector, the role of stakeholder are not effective in some sector. This is in line with Oyesiku (1998) in Obinne (2011) which submitted that the there is a need to empower residents to advocate for their community of interest and endeavour to create policy and strategy which is respectful of their vision. It is not possible, nor realistic, to expect that the expectations of every stakeholder will be able to be met in every situation, recognising the diverse range of ideas, backgrounds, and aspirations that stakeholders do have. Also, Koontz found a significant effect in counties where the citizens and the elected officials were concerned about the issues involved, and where participants related to strong social networks that focused on the problems being addressed.

Findings from research question three also show that most respondents talked about role conflict, corruption, inadequate funds, lip service rendered by government officials, introduction of partisan project. This is also in line with the position of Nelson and Wright (1995) which emphasize that in poor stakeholder participatory processes, stakeholders may easily conclude that their involvement has no impact when it becomes clear to them, they cannot influence decisions that affect them because the participatory process resembles a "talking shop" without concrete action. Chase, Decker, & Lauber (2014) also opined that stakeholder participation is often evaluated based on criteria derived from theory, and the analysis of cases in the absence of the stakeholders who were involved in the project right from the start.

Conclusions

It can be concluded from the findings of this study that the involvement of stakeholders in development is not felt in every sector even though their involvement would go far in the process. They have the mandate to advise the government, supervise any project on behalf of the government and carry out development projects with little fund or support from the government. Therefore, adequate stakeholders' involvement in transformation process is needed for development of the society especially rural communities.

Recommendations

Stakeholders therefore should be given an adequate chance to participate in the development project and their participation should not be passive but rather should be active as this would make community transformation process to be encompassing. They should be allowed to advise the government, supervise the government project, and they should also carry out some developmental project on behalf of the government in their community. However, this role should be done in such a way that would not promote role conflict or that would not make the stakeholder see themselves as being useless in society. The role of each stakeholder must therefore be spelt out accordingly to avoid issues of different opinions. Based on the findings, government, individuals, and societies should collaborate to carry out developmental project as it has shown that government cannot do it alone, they need supporting hand from the people in the community, therefore, various stakeholders should endeavor to fill in such vacuum in various capacities.

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