

# Community Mobilization Awareness: Strategy for Rural Development in Nigeria

**Jonathan Akwagiobe Ukah\***

Department of Sociology, Psychology, Criminology & Security Studies, Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, Abakaliki, Nigeria

## Abstract

This study examined community mobilization awareness: Strategy for rural development in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria to ascertain the relationship between lack of increased awareness and rural infrastructure; and lack of increased participation of community members and rural development in Northern Senatorial District (NSD) of Cross River State. Adopted for this study is a survey design because of the large number of the respondents that were involved. A questionnaire was the instrument used to collect the data of the respondents. Chi-square statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The result revealed that lack of increased awareness impact negatively on rural infrastructure. Also, lack of increased participation of community members has impacted negatively on rural development as a whole. We commend that government needs to educate and sensitize community members to actively participate in community development as stake holders and also need to provide them with financial support for awareness campaign. We conclude that community mobilization is sacrosanct for the enlightenment of community members towards enhancing rural development.

## Keywords

Awareness, Participation, Self-Help, Rural Development, Community Members

Received: May 31, 2017 / Accepted: August 3, 2017 / Published online: October 17, 2017

© 2017 The Authors. Published by American Institute of Science. This Open Access article is under the CC BY license.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

---

## 1. Introduction

Rural development in Nigeria has suffered setbacks due to lack of awareness or insufficient community mobilization which has led to poor participation of community members in the provision of basic needs such as portable drinking water, good road network, health and educational facilities in Nigeria specifically Cross River State. Huberman, Med, Klaus and Davis (2014) argued that community members are important in decision making processes for community development planning. A number of scholars (Ering and Osonwa, 2016) have argued that the non involvement of community members in rural development is caused by the adoption of top to bottom development approach by the government which limits local community participation in problem identification, project prioritization, design,

preparation and implementation of community projects. On the above note, this study investigated the causal link between lack of increased awareness and rural infrastructure; and community participation and rural development.

The specific objectives of the study are to: (i) examine the impact of lack of increased awareness of community mobilization on rural infrastructure (provision of portable drinking water, access roads, mass media technology, educational and health facilities) in Northern Senatorial District (NSD) of Cross River State; (ii) determine how lack of increased participation of community members affects rural development in Northern Senatorial District (NSD) of Cross River State and (iii) suggest measures that can be put in place for effective community mobilization towards rural development in Northern Senatorial District (NSD) of Cross River State.

---

\* Corresponding author

E-mail address: [developmentimpactconsult@yahoo.com](mailto:developmentimpactconsult@yahoo.com)

It is the belief of the researcher that this study will be of immense benefits to academic community, development partners, policy makers and community members. This is based on the fact that the study has provided strategies on how mobilization of community members can be carried out for effective rural development. Findings and recommendations from this study will be used as a guide to re-position rural communities. It will also be useful to researchers who may want to replicate this research in other communities in Nigeria

#### *Statement of the problem*

Rural development in Nigeria has suffered setbacks due to lack of increased awareness or insufficient community mobilization which has led to poor participation of community members in the provision of basic needs such as portable drinking water, good road network, health and educational facilities in Nigeria specifically Cross River State, Nigeria. Huberman, Med, Klaus and Davis (2014) argued that community members are important in decision making processes for community development planning.

#### *Literature review*

##### *Awareness and rural infrastructure*

Nwachukwu and Ezeh (2007) conducted a study on Impact of selected rural development programmes on poverty alleviation in Ikwuano LGA, Abia State, Nigeria and came out with findings that in the area of community development awareness, majority 66.63% of the respondents were aware of the existence of programmes on poverty alleviation. While 34.37% were not aware of such programmes. This implies a weak grass - root governmental information dissemination system. The fact that most of these programmes have been implemented for more than 2 decades and a good proportion 34.37% of the rural people were still not aware of their existence is unfortunate indeed. Growth of basic services is necessary for economic and social development which has been lacking in the rural areas (Mwangi, Mugenda & Karagu, 2013).

As part of the plan by the federal government of Nigeria to revamp the rural economy, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources have established positive relationships between access to infrastructure and agricultural productivity and growth. It is based on this relationships that the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources is planning to provide resources for construction of new roads, rehabilitation of existing ones and maintenance of roads to communities and selected agricultural activities. (CAD, 2017). It has been reported that the majority (90.0%) of the rural dwellers embarked on journey on untarred rural roads and 84.0% of them travelled on bad roads, which consumed more time than necessary. Since time is money, rural roads

impoverished the rural dwellers in Nigeria (Akinola, 2003).

#### *Participation of community members in rural development*

According to Ewelum and Mbara (2015), the increased participation of the community people will foster success in any project which they embark upon. It encourages self-help and utilization of human and material resources to utmost capacity for community development. When there is lack of participation of community members in rural development, it will be difficult to build a common front towards improving the conditions of rural communities. It is the unified efforts of community members and other community based organizations that help to initiate change in rural communities. Community based organization (CBOs) receives assistance to increase their development impact on their communities. This support includes: increase management and program outreach capacities, technical and financial support for the development and implementation of local community projects. It builds solidarity within communities through working with local groups to overcome ethnic, political or religious divisions that impede co-operation for the improvement of conditions affecting them. Community participation is an aspect of community mobilization which brings community members together as stake holders for civil dialogue which Imhabekhai (2009) explained that citizen participation means active involvement of all the men and women in a community, irrespective of age, nature of citizenship, socio-economic status, political affiliation, religion, level of education, and many more in planning and implementing programmes and projects that are of benefit to the people.

This implies that all hands must be on desk to take decisions that will help to improve the community. In affirmation, Mercycorps (2016) explained that with community mobilization, participation is about meeting the interests of the whole community. When every member of a community has the chance, directly or through representation, to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of community-level initiatives, there is a higher likelihood that the program accurately reflects their real needs and interests. The approach takes into consideration the different experiences, needs and capabilities of various groups in community women and men, youth and the elderly, persons with disabilities, the able bodied, ethnic, religion, language, minorities and majorities.

#### *Theoretical framework*

The theory adopted as the framework for this study is Community Driven Development Approach (CDD). Community driven approach was developed by World Bank in 1991. The essence of the approach was to support community members with resources to plan, take decisions

and implement local community projects. Community driven development programmes operate on the principle of transparency, participation, local empowerment, demanding responsiveness, greater downward accountability and enhanced local capacity. World Bank (2016) noted that when given clear and transparent rules, access to information, appropriate capacity and financial support, poor men and women can effectively organize to identify community priorities and address local problems by working together with local governments and other supportive institutions.

When community projects are community driven, it will encourage community participation. Community Driven Development (CDD) is a new Community-based participatory approach to development which involves the beneficiaries in their design and management of projects (Nwachukwu and Ezeh, 2007) They further maintained that Community Driven Development ensures the inclusion of all the social groupings in the society and empowers the beneficiaries to take charge of their development agenda while injecting sustainability mechanism and also leveraging their sense of ownership. Dokpesi and Ibiezugbe (2010) pointed out that community participation emphasizes grass root input in the development strategies in which the ordinary people in the village are involved in the decisions that directly affect their lives. Similarly, Ering (2005) noted that participatory model emphasizes the role of benefiting communities as actors in deciding their needs and how they should be met. Combined social energies of NGOs, CBOs, Nations, government institutions, communities and other development facilitators towards community mobilization, project implementation project sustainability and financial support aim are encouraging community participation and a community driven development.

World Bank recognizes that community driven development approach and actions are important elements of an effective poverty reduction and sustainable development strategy. Community driven development is designed to provide solution to varieties of needs, including water supply, sanitation, school, health, access roads, and micro enterprises, nutritional programmes for mothers and infants and post conflict construction

The underlying assumption of Community Driven Development according to Naidoo and Finn (2001) is that communities are the best judges of how their lives and livelihoods can be improved and, if provided with adequate resources and information, they can organize themselves to provide for their immediate needs. Salomonsen and Diachok (2015) were of the opinion that maintenance of rural infrastructure through community driven development will enhance rural infrastructural sustainability

## 2. Methodology

The study area covers the Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State comprising of Bekwarra, Obudu, Obanliku, Ogoja and Yala Local Government Areas. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted where a purposive sampling technique was used to select communities from the political wards and a systematic sampling technique was used to draw the sample size of 400 from the population. Adopted for this study is a survey research design. This research design is considered most appropriate because it collects large and small samples from the population. The information obtained from the respondents through the use of questionnaires were quantified, analyzed and interpreted through the use of statistical techniques. The justification for adopting survey research design is because it is used to measure public opinion with a view to reaching a solution or to shaping public policy. The questionnaire was the instrument used to elicit information from the respondents. This method of data collection was chosen because the researcher considered it suitable for the collection of data that relate to individuals' level of community development awareness and participation. Another reason for using a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection is based on the fact that it is suitable for this type of study that involves a large number of respondents that cannot be directly studied. Predictive analytic software (PASW) was used to analyze substantive issues and chi-square test of the relationship of the following: Lack of increased awareness and rural infrastructure; and community participation and rural development.

## 3. Results

Hypothesis one: Lack of increased awareness of community mobilization and rural infrastructure in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State

**Table 1.** Chi-square analysis of relationship between lack of increased awareness of community mobilization and rural infrastructure

		Male	Female	
YES	Count	200	154	354
	Expected Count	207.5	146.5	354.0
NO	Count	28	7	35
	Expected Count	20.5	14.5	35.0
Total	Count	228	161	389
	Expected Count	228.0	161.0	389.0

Source: Field work, 2017

Degree of freedom =1

Significant level=.05

Computed chi- square value = 7.253

Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): Lack of increased awareness of community mobilization does not significantly impact on rural infrastructure (provision of portable drinking water,

access roads, educational and health facilities) in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State

Alternate hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>): Lack of increased awareness of community mobilization significantly impact on rural development (provision of portable drinking water, access roads, educational and health facilities) in Cross River State

Decision: Since the calculated value of X<sup>2</sup> in table 1 is 7.253 at degree of freedom of 1, with .05 level of significance is greater than the table value of 3.841, we therefore, reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) which states that lack of increased awareness of community mobilization significantly relates to rural infrastructure (provision of portable drinking water, access roads, educational and health facilities) in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State

Hypothesis two: Lack of increased participation among community members and rural development in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River

**Table 2.** Chi-square analysis of relationship between lack of increased participation among community members and rural development

		Male	Female	
YES	Count	196	126	322
	Expected Count	188.7	133.3	322.0
NO	Count	32	35	67
	Expected Count	39.3	27.7	67.0
Total	Count	228	161	389
	Expected Count	228.0	161.0	389.0

Source: Field work, 2017  
 Degree of freedom =1  
 Significant level=.05  
 Computed chi- square value = 3.928

Null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): Lack of increased participation among community members does not significantly affect rural development in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State

Alternate hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>): Lack of increased participation among community members significantly affects rural development in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State.

Decision: Since the calculated value of X<sup>2</sup> in table 2 is 3.928 at degree of freedom of 1, with .05 level of significance is greater than the table value of 3.841, we therefore, reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) and accept the alternate hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) which states that lack of increased participation among community members significantly affect rural development in Cross River State.

### 4. Discussion

The results of hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant relationship between lack of increased awareness

and rural infrastructure with the significant level of .05 and chi-square value of 7.253 greater than the table value of 3.841. The implication of this result is that lack of increased awareness has impacted negatively on the establishment of rural infrastructure. Also, certain factors have been found to be responsible for lack of increased awareness among rural people. They include lack of encouragement by the government, lack of funds to carry out awareness campaign and lack of interest by some community members towards rural development. These identified factors have hindered community mobilization towards rural infrastructural development in Northern Senatorial District in Cross River State. The findings corroborate with the view of Idiegbeyan-Ose and Akpoghme (2009) who explained that poverty and lack of awareness of the modern farming techniques characterize the life style of people in the rural areas. The findings are also in agreement with the position of Ewelum and Mbara (2015) who pointed out those problems that militate against people’s involvement in rural development are lack of funds, poor planning and implementation.

The findings from hypothesis two indicate that lack of increased participation among community members significantly affects rural development in Northern Senatorial District of Cross River State. This is supported by the high chi-square value of 3.928 greater than the table value of 3.841 at .05 significant levels. This corroborated with the study of Ekweruo (2011) who noted that rural development projects can be achieved through the instrumentality of the full involvement of existing community development associations. The implication of this is that community based associations are the most potent vehicle for accelerated community development among the communities in Nigeria. The findings were further affirmed by Egwu (1991) that the participation of communities at all levels of health and community development programmes had long been recognized as an essential ingredient to the anticipated success of such programmes.

### 5. Recommendations

1. Government should create community development awareness in rural communities in Nigeria using National orientation Agency. The awareness should be based on the need for self-help efforts towards community development, improved agricultural practices, and information on how to engage in self-sustaining economic activities.
2. In order to improve social and community participation in rural communities in Nigeria. The government needs to educate and sensitize community members to actively participate in community development as stake

holders. To achieve this, the following should be taken into consideration. The development practitioner needs to raise awareness within the community on critical nature of civil participation.

3. The government should involve rural people in the development plan that concerns them since they constitute a larger number of the national population. Through these mechanisms, community people can plan, manage local initiatives, dialogue and co-operate with local government authorities and other development institutions which is a necessary step for a successful community mobilization.
4. Government should formulate policies that will promote development programmes and sustainability of projects in rural areas. This can only be achieved through the involvement of the community members in the decision making process of any project to be carried out and should be trained on how to sustain such projects. This will encourage community development driven initiative.

## 6. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that mobilization consists of campaign carried out to educate and enlighten community members towards developing their communities. Through community mobilization, there will be increased awareness and increased participation of community members in the process of change, Since it has been discovered that there is a significant relationship between lack of increased awareness and rural infrastructure with the significant level of rural development as a whole, it is necessary at this point that government need to intensify effort to improve the awareness level of the rural people towards enhancing rural infrastructure such as health centres, educational facilities and roads. A number of mobilization strategies towards rural development that have been recommended above to ameliorate the problems confronting community mobilization in rural communities, if applied will improve social and community participation.

## References

- [1] Akinola, S. R. (1991). Self-Help Projects and Rural Development: A Political Perspective. Paper presented at the Fourth National Conference on Political Mobilization for a Stable Third Republic in Nigeria, organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti, 9–11 December, 1991.
- [2] Dokpesi, A. O. and Ibiezugb M. I. (2010). Non-participatory development as root cause of underdevelopment of Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. *South-South Journal of Culture and Development*,12(2) 119-155
- [3] Commercial Agriculture Development Project (2017). Rural infrastructure, farm access road network and rural energy. Retrieved on the 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2017 from <http://www.cadpnigeria.org/components/ruralinfra.html>
- [4] Egwu, I. N. (1991). Mobilization of Resources for Rural Development in Nigeria: Community
- [5] Development and Primary Health Care: Framework for Interactive rural development in Nigeria. In M. O. Ebong (ed), Wusen Press Ltd. EkpoAbasi, Calabar
- [6] Ekweruo C. K. (2011). Role of voluntary organizations in community development in Nigeria. University Of Nigeria Nsukka. Retrieved from: <http://www.studymode.com/essays/Role-Of-Voluntary-Organizations-In-Community-758362.html>
- [7] Ering, S. O. (2006). Community development. Calabar: University of Calabar Press.
- [8] Ewelum, J. N. & Mbara K. U. (2015). Mobilization strategies for effective community development projects in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Vol. 5, No 5
- [9] Huberman, B. R. N, Med; B. S. N., Klaus, T. & Davis, L. M. A. (2014). Strategies guided by Best practice for community mobilization. retrieved from: [www.Advocateforyouth.org/publication](http://www.Advocateforyouth.org/publication)
- [10] Idiegbeyan-Ose, J. D. B. M., & Akpoghome, T. U. (2009). Information as an effective tool in rural development. *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, 1(3), 022-028
- [11] Imhabekhai, C. I. (2009). Management of community development programmes and projects. Benin-city: Uniben Press
- [12] Mercycorps (2016). Community mobilization sector approach. <https://www.mercycorps.org/research-resources/community-mobilization-sector-approach>
- [13] Mwangi, S. M., Mugenda O. M., & Karagu, N. M. (2013). Potential for positive socioeconomic transformation through rural industrialization: Evidence from the Magana Industrial Park in Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research* 1(8)
- [14] Naidoo, K. & Finn, H. V. (2001). Impossibility to reality: A Reflection and position paper on the CIVICU Index on Civic Society Project 1991-2001, Washington, DC: CIVICUS
- [15] Nwachukwu, I. N. & Ezech C. I. (2007). Impact of selected rural development programmes on poverty alleviation in Ikwano L. G. A. Abia State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development* 7(5), 1-17.