Prioritizing Felt-Need Principle in Community Development for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Identification of the most pressing need in a community is essential for community development as well as sustainable development. Community development, which is the unification of people's effort with that of the government towards improving standard of living for national development and sustainable development must be persistent of wide consultation of those expected to enjoy the project or programme. The paper which is theoretical in nature basically, prioritize the principle of felt-need in community development for sustainable development in Nigeria. This deliberation was executed within the broader context of humanistic theory as theoretical framework. The use of observation for primary data, use of internet, journal, thesis and expanse of the literature assisted in the source of information. The paper found evidence of abandonment, lack of after-care and proper usage in some communities on project due to non-application of felt-need principle. The paper concluded, among others, that community members should be consulted for project identification, initiation and implementation for community development and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Felt-Need, Community, Development, Sustainability, Identification, Project and Programme*

INTRODUCTION

Most argument supported that self initiated community development projects and programmes are vital to the social, political and economic progress of any developing nations including Nigeria. Community development practices involve provision of community needs, building programmes and necessary activities perceived to be deficient in the community. United Nations as quoted by Onyenemezu & Olumati (2013) asserts that, community development is a process by which the efforts of people themselves are united with those of government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate those communities into the life of the nation and to enable them contribute fully to national progress.

The above shows the imperative position of community effort toward its development as well as national development. These further affirm the need for citizens' effort which will help in community development for the purpose of enhancing Sustainable Development. Community development, whether defined as a process, a movement, a programme or a method, universally has its purpose to develop man and its community to better their welfare and assist in sustainability. Adekola & Oyebamiji (2012) supported this argument that, community development has been accepted as a major strategy for rapid development especially at the grassroots level. They further stated that, community development processes and programmes is important for economic and social growth and development, and ability to adhere to the structure of community development determine to a large extent the success of such community development project or programme.

Therefore, people should identify their need for community development action. This idea is called felt-need principle in community development, which arises from lack of something or the desire to have something which is crucial in the opinion of members of the community. Felt-need in community development occurs as a result of people's awareness of the fact that they possess the capability to confront and dislodge their limitations and solve their problem through self initiative and collective effort. The belief is that those development actions or programmes will

meet the need of the people in the area and address what is lacking.

Despite this prodigious idea, most community development project are provided by directives from those outside the community such as politicians, philanthropist, non-governmental organization and, government and its agency without proper consultation with the citizen to identify their most pressing need (felt need). Most of those projects are put in place during electioneering by aspirant or towards end of a regime by the government, contributing to lack of proper consultation about peoples' most pressing need in the intended community.

The above has resulted into various project or programme being abandoned during implementation or after completion, lack of due care from citizen on the project, lack of value for money expended on those projects and wastage of resources that would have being channeled towards project that will improve the standard of living of the citizen and enhance sustainable development of the country. These and related issues necessitate prioritizing felt need principle in community development toward enhancement of sustainable development with observatory evidence and discussions with members of some communities in Southwestern Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Humanistic Theory

Humanism, a paradigm that emerged in the late 1960s focused on the human freedom, dignity and potential in their development. Propounded by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, humanism viewed development as a self-actualized, autonomous people initiated and self-initiated. The theory believed that people act with intentionality and values on issues that concerns them. It also believed that it is necessary to study the person as a whole, especially as an individual grows and develops over the lifespan.

Humanist paradigm refers to theories and approaches that emphasis the participation of people as the most important aspect of the development process. Coetzee, Graff, Hendrick and Wood cited in Mulu (2011) opined that, participatory development approached emerged out of the failures of traditional approaches, to bring about positive change in developing countries. The theory emphasized participation at the grassroots as the essential basis for building community capacities, to collectively mobilize local resources and manage them effectively and efficiently in order to uplift entire communities, out of poverty and deprivation.

Humanist theory supported the principle of felt-need in community development which believed that ability to adhere to the structure of community and, identification of needs by the people living in the community enhance the success of project/prgrammes in that community for sustainable development. The study through humanistic theory, explained the importance of citizens' participation in community projects/programmes for development. It is important for members of the community to mobilize their resources, or at least effort, to support actions that will better their standard of living. Even, if project/programme will be provided by the outsiders to the community, the community members should be given an opportunity to identify the most pressing need, so that total support during implementation by the community members will be achieved and value will be derived on the money expended on those projects through satisfaction of needs in the community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Principle of Felt Need

The starting point of any community development project is problem identification. The identification of problem can be either identification of the most pressing need by community members which is called "Felt-Need", or through visitors to the community. Whatever the case, both aimed at improving the standard of living of people in the community, but with peculiar advantages to the achievement of the stated objectives for the community.

Oyekunle cited in Akande (2016) opined that, the principle of felt-need stresses that people must be able to identify what they want to do in order to achieve their desired development. Such identification is possible when people are willing to remove obstacle to development which is generally known as the problem in the community. Obviously, the felt-needs of communities differ from one another. While a community may be in need of drinkable water, another may be in need of good roads or hospitals or market stalls or primary school blocks. Each community will have peculiar need that requires urgent attention or desires immediate satisfaction. The above affirms that felt-needs is about the difference between "what

is" and "what ought to be" in the standard of living of people in a community. This can be called imbalance in the state of the community affair. Oyebamiji & Adekola (2008) and Abiona (2009) supported the argument that principle of felt needs involves community members' identification of priorities and setting goals for themselves to attain development. Adekola and Oyebamiji (2012) asserts that, the ability of communities and organizations to, in practice, adhere to the structure of Community Development determines to a large extent the success of such community development programme. Success here is measured in terms of total implementation of the project's plan, acceptance and utilization by the community and ability of the project/programme to positively impact on the problems it is designed to solve in the community. Felt-Need can be material or non-materials. Material felt-need is the community need that can be seen in form of physical properties such as portable water, schools, electricity, hospital, police post, recreation center, while non-material felt-need are those that can be feel or observed and enjoyed such as security, peace, food security, justice, among others.

However, Akande (2016) stated that identification of felt-need in the community is a problem-solving process which cannot be left solely to the whims of the community members, but must be democratic enough to allow the maximum participation. Whereas, Onyenemezu & Olumati (2013) opined that felt-need means desire, feeling and aspiration to acquire something essential or important. In community development, focus is on the identification by the people of their needs, desire or lack, which will in turn lead to the improvement of the welfare of the community. Therefore, felt-need involves problem identification, prioritization of needs/problems and provision of programmes or projects to address the most pressing need or problem that needs urgent attention.

Community

A community is an amorphous concept that lacks an explicit definition. The usage depends on the view of the user varying from geographical, economical, social to political process. Generally, a community may be referred to as a group of people interacting among themselves in a geographically defined space, with certain similar cultural attributes like norms, values, belief, and system among others. Onyeozu (2007) perceived community as a

territorially bounded social system within which people live in harmony, love and intimacy, sharing common social, economic and cultural characteristics. Moreover, Akande (2016) opined that community can be viewed from different perspective; as a geographical area where social interaction is element; as a political system of people who congregate or associate specifically for social purposes; or as a combination of social units and system necessary for social cohesiveness and a high degree of self- sufficiency.

Community could be said to be elastic. That is to say, it could be widened or narrowed as occasion demands. For example, we have Ilaro Community in Egbado South Local Government, Ogun State; Ipetumodu Community in Ife North Local Government, Osun State; Apete Community in Ido Local Government, Oyo State; Yoruba Community, Igbo Community, Hausa Community, Nigeria Community, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) and one could talk of the global community comprising of the entire world. In the word of Ukomadu (2018), community is a group of people living in a contiguous geographical area, having common centers of interest and activities, and functioning together in the chief concerns of life. Community could be homogeneous or heterogeneous. A community of different ethnic group having their different cultural and social issue, yet they all inhabit together is called heterogeneous community like Nigeria community, German community, Canada Community. But, those communities with similar cultural and social issues are homogeneous community.

Development

Development connotes different things to different categories of people. In strictly economic terms, development means the improvement in economic conditions of a nation such as increase in Gross National Product, Per capita Income, and Standard of Living, among others. Whereas, Kilani (2000) opined that development is the process of sustained increase in total and per capital income accompanied by structural transformation and modernization of socio-economic environment.

In relation to the state affairs, development represents a change by which an entire social system, turned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of

life widely perceived as unsatisfactorily toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and socially better. However, Onyeozu (2007) describe development as a continuous process of positive change in the quality and span of life of a person or group of persons. Akande (2016), in his own word opined that, development is a multi-dimensional process involving change in structure, attitude and institution as well as acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty.

Sustainable Development

The world Commission on Environment and Development Report cited in Mulu (2011) defines sustainable development as development that meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own need. The argument for sustainable development is to ensure socially responsible economic development while protecting the resource base and the environment for the benefit of future generation.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2001 opined that sustainable development involves integrating the economic, social and environmental objectives of the society in order to maximize human well being in the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their need. While supporting this, Oyeshola (2008) identified three main factors; economic sustainability which is the ability to produce goods and services on a continuous basis without jeopardizing sectoral balance of the country; social sustainability which is the adequate provision of social services including health, education among others, and political accountability; and environmental sustainability which means a stable resource base, avoiding over exploitation of renewable resource.

Impact of Felt-Need in Community Development and Sustainable Development

The important of felt need for community development and sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. Provision of social services is the bane of development in communities. Provision of education, portable water, security, electricity, market stall, good road among others, will ensure improvement in the standard of living of people in the community. Identification of the most pressing needs is therefore necessary as satisfaction of need is the solution to want by the community.

For instance, in a community that most houses has borehole water, will not be in need of pipe borne water if provided. This will only lead to abandonment of the project during implementation and after implementation. There are some communities in Nigeria, in which pipe borne water supply is provided and abandoned by the people in the community because they have good water supply. The amount expended on the project would have been channeled toward another project, if the most pressing need (felt-need) is identified.

In figure 1 (Appendix), a pipe borne water was fully installed and completed in Federal Housing Estate, Nirowi, Ondo City in Ondo State, Nigeria. The provision of that pipe borne water does not meet the need of the community as there are sources of water for most houses, leading to abandonment of the project. Report on focus group discussion with people living in the area affirmed the above that the water was provided by a federal honourable as a constituency project, without due consultation about their need. Adekola and Oyebamiji (2012) supported the above argument, that the analysis of data on hypothesis formulated to test the significant effect of need identification on sustainability of community development programme reveals that the r. calculated is 0.763 and r. tabulated value is 0.691. At α value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between need identification and sustainability of community development programmes in Shell Petroleum Development Company in host communities. The same was observed in another project at Ilaro Community in Ogun State (figure 2). In this occasion, a garri processing factory was initiated and completed by the State Governor in 2009, with grinding and frying machine, water supply and other facilities that will ensure smooth production. The town is known for huge deposit of cassava and garri production, in their own local method. The report from group discussion discovered that, the state government failed to consult those in the line of business (garri processing and production) before locating the factory to the inner part of the town, where most believe is not accessible to the market and their customer. The factory functions for some months before being abandoned after the tenure of state government that initiated the project. One of the reasons for abandonment was fee introduced by the state government before accessibility to production,

which is alien to their local system of their production.

In another vein, proper identification of felt-need has resulted to successful project initiation, implementation and improved standard of living in some communites. Onyenemezu and Olumati (2013) reported that in 2005, the people of Iboro community in Ifo Local Government Area in Ogun State successfully constructed a local bridge which was one of their felt-needs. This was supervised by Mr. Ademolu Funshion as the community development group chairman and Mr. Abroro Tom, as the community development officer. This particular felt-need came to them as an urgent and pressing one. The people realized the fact that the bridge after completion will not only make them have free access to their neighboring communities but also will make them spend less amount of money in transporting food items. This bridge construction was pioneered by motor byke riders popular called "Okada". They vowed not to relent over the project until it was completed. This project succeeded because it was their intrinsic felt-need. Every citizen was actively involved because all of them will make use of the bridge to their neighboring communities. This, no doubt, increased the socio-economic status of the people and reduced their poverty level.

Also, Kisi community in Irepo Local Government Area of Oyo State identified their felt-need for a central market. This was pioneered by Kisi Progressive Association through its various organs viz chiefs, elders, sole administrator of the Local Government Area and some others. They successfully planned and completed a modern market which today, is being used by the community and beyond. This also has increased their socioeconomic status and helped in reducing their poverty level.

Provision of social amenities is essential for sustainable development for sustainable development. Obe cited in Oyeshola (2008) supported the argument that, provision of social service has persistently canvassed as the safest and quickest means of poverty alleviation and human development, and this is requirement for sustainable development. The ability to identify the most pressing need in social service will ensure community development and sustainable development. Poverty alleviation and human development needs social services, security, among others. In a community where there is adequate portable water supply, failure to identify the felt-need, which may be healthcare facilities and services before implementing project for portable water amount to waste of resources which would have been channeled toward provision of healthcare materials such as drug, dressing material, renovation of health center, among others. How will a community wasting resources have sustainable development? The answer is proper identification of felt-need in the community.

However, Imhabekhai (2009) reveals how Irhirhi community of Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State, has many completed and on-going felt-needs projects such as primary school, market, electricity and water bore hole projects. These were also executed through the various organs like the chiefs, youths, women, elders etc in the community.

Also Gabriel cited in Onyenemezu & Olumati (2013) informs us that Sapele community town hall in Delta State was completed by the indigenes when it became their felt-need. He also states that women organizations embarked on various felt-needs projects in the community like markets, town halls, school buildings, maternity homes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Felt-need principle is essential for community development and sustainable development. The study prioritises the principle of felt-need in community development as essential for sustainable development in Nigeria. It concluded that project or programme that have the participation of community members from problem identification to project initiation and implementation contributes more to community development for sustainable development.

The study recommends as follows;

- Popular participation of community members in project initiation and implementation must be prioritise for sustainable development.
- Community members should decide, through their association, what is their most pressing need that requires immediate satisfaction, before any project is initiated.
- Government should always support community members or association for project or programmes that will enhance sustainable development.
- Project/programme completed should be handed over to community association for proper maintenance and after care.

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APPENDIX

Figure1. *(Abandoned Pipe Borne Water at Federal Housing Estate, Ondo City, Ondo State).*

Figure2. *(Abandoned Garri Processing Factory, Ilaro, Yewa South Local Govt, Ogun State).*