



# PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN AKWANGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA



\*AKWA, V. L., UJIH, O.<sup>1</sup> AND KABIR, I. A.<sup>1</sup>

Department of Geography, Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nigeria

<sup>1</sup>Department of Environmental Sciences, Federal University, Dutse, Jigawa State, Nigeria

\*Corresponding Author:

## ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the contributions of people's participation in the organization and implementation of community development projects through in Akwanga Local Government Area, Nasarawa State of Nigeria. It also examines the extent to which people are involved in self-help projects. It highlights the factors that motivate citizens to participate in organization and community development. A structured survey instrument was used in collecting data from a sample of 500 respondents for the study. Data collected were analyzed using Chi-square. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between citizens' participation in community development through self-help projects. The findings also revealed that there is significant relationship between citizens' derived benefits and their participation in community development through self help Projects. It was therefore, recommended that people need to be involved in every stage of the life-cycle of a project so as to ensure utilization, sustainability and benefit derivation. Beside, the development agents should find out the felt-needs of the community before embarking.

**Keywords:** People's Participation, Self-help, Projects, Organization, Community Development

## INTRODUCTION

People's participation in development has assumed the centre stage as an important condition for achieving accelerated and sustainable development. This can be globally, as central element of the People-centred development strategy. In this regard, many development practitioners and agencies have emphasized the need to secure active support and participation of the people involved in the development process. Olaleye (2004) argues that this development not only brings about progressive reduction of material deprivation and social inequalities, but also promotes the growth of human capabilities and potential. Morgan (1993) and UNDP (1999) assert that, between the 1950s and the 1960s, these initiatives cumulated into the process of community development, which then sought to involve citizens in the efforts to develop their communities. UNDP (1999) further notes that community development during this era sought to build community-based organizations, which were intended to serve as vehicles through which the local people could get actively involved.

The World Bank (2004) avers that this era was largely dominated by efforts towards promoting peoples' participation in community development, which would require a fundamental shift in attitudes and in methodologies, thereby breaking the top-down non-participatory practice. In view of this, several major international agencies, such as Food and Agricultural Organizations (FAO), World Bank, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP) as well as numerous Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been championing the participatory development approach having evaluated the unpleasant consequences of non-participatory approach to the development processes.

According to Roodt (2001, Theron, 2007), people's participation is regarded as one of the ingredients necessary to promote sustainable development. This was concurred by Nwosu (2010), who saw participation as fundamental to developing self-sustaining momentum of development in a particular area.

In Africa, the importance of people's participation in development has also been acknowledged and documented. The improvement of life should be reflected

in increase in the level of economic, social and human development indices - the growth of human capabilities and potential. It is, therefore, important that the role that peoples' participation plays in community development projects is analyzed to be able to pinpoint the contribution of participation on these activities and their determinant factors. Development principle advocates community participation in community-based projects because it has long been seen and recognized as an effective means of assisting people to mobilize their numerous and otherwise untapped resources available within them towards improving their community. Community participation in community development ensures the achievement of development objective. It is also a recognized way of making basic amenities and services available and accessible to the beneficiaries (Anyanwu, 1999).

Community projects have played a significant role in the socio-economic development of various parts of Nigeria. They have been effectively harnessed to provide social services in the rural areas. Community projects which have been playing a significant role in alleviating poverty at the grass - roots level will continue to provide amenities which the government, with all its resources strapped, is unable to provide as quickly as they are needed by the people (Olaleye, 2004). There is need to identify and encourage the various factors that enhance the peoples' participation in self-help projects so as to ensure the peoples' continual participation in community development projects. This will aid the development of our various communities which will consequently reduce the rural-urban migration rate to the barest minimum in Nigeria. (Okafor, 2000). Anyanwu (2002) and Onyozu (2010) claims that community development is a conscious and deliberate effort aimed at helping communities recognize their needs and assume increasing responsibilities for solving their problems thereby increasing their capacities to participate fully in the life of the nation. Community development emphasizes self-help by the citizens and also initiates a people-directed process that is based upon their perception of their needs. Egenti (2002) also sees community development as the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of

communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nations, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. The development aspect of community development involves the stimulation of self-help and people's active participation in community affairs.

People's participation in community development, an approach to development strategy has been in practice since the 1970s. The international health agencies then began to promote and finance it on an international scale. Several groups working with the poor people and disadvantaged groups have been able to establish projects in areas where these neglected groups had little or no access to government welfare programmes, by sharing an awareness that people's supports and participation is important and crucial for success (Egenti, 2002). People's participation is an educational empowering process in which people, in partnership with those able to assist them, identify their needs and assume responsibility themselves to plan, manage, control, and assess the collective actions that are necessary based on shared interest on what one can do best. Community participation emphasizes total control by the community members; de-emphasizes a lesser degree of government imposition of projects on the people (community)

Okediran (1998) refers to people's participation as an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receiving a share of project benefits. This implies the need for people's conscience to be sensitized towards active participation in community development projects as a tool for mobilizing new and additional resources, which hitherto would have been wasted or untapped. Midgley (2011), opines that citizens' participation make people to respond to development programmes. He sees citizens' participation as a process of giving information on development programmes that could in turn elicit the desired awareness in community members for effective community development process. It aids people's wisdom or the power of the people to solve their problem, which is peculiar to them using resources available at their disposal. The resources available at their disposal could be cash value, material or human resources (interrelated relationship or association could bring about positive changes in the life of one's community for instance, through one citizen's relationship with the minister of Water Resources, his community becomes irrigated for higher agricultural yields all year round, thereby improving the income of his community members who are farmers and improving the life of his community in general). Also, in Osuji (2004) views citizens' participation in terms of development as the engagement in project by community members in all the various decision-making on development programmes in their areas. People's participation is not just all about getting people involved

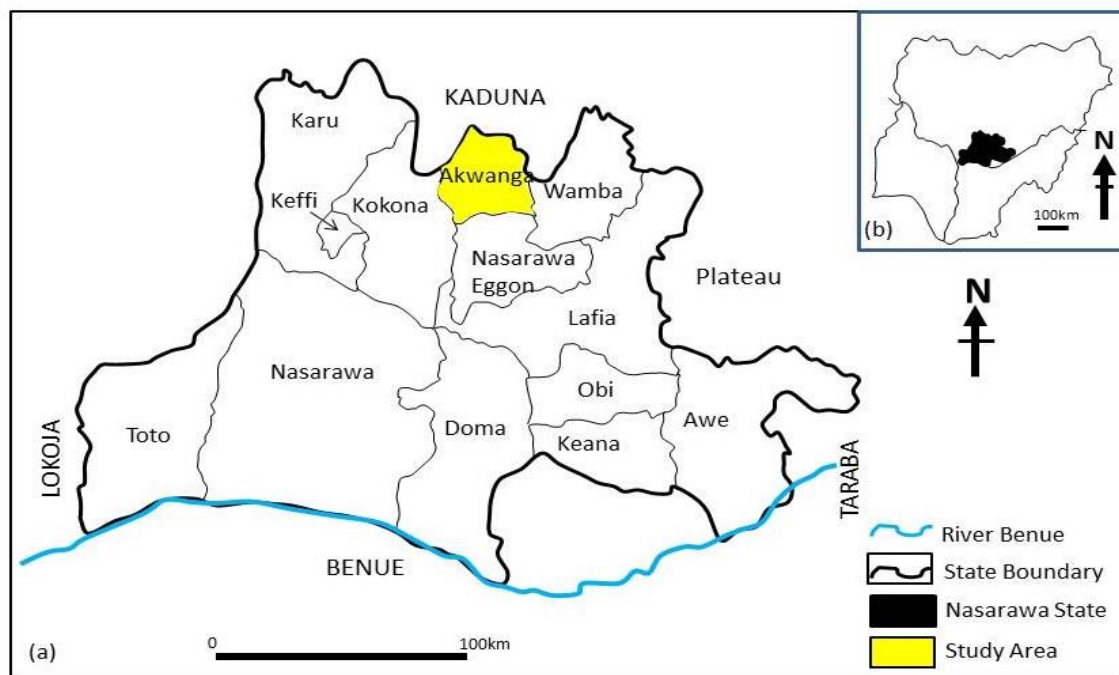
in decision-making process. It also involves ensuring their effective contribution of resources and developing their ability to understand and share in the experiences of other peoples even if those experiences were failures, for there is usually a lesson to learn from other peoples' situations. The principle of people's participation implies that the workers have to supply the necessary and needed stimulus for the success of the project (Anyanwu, 1999).

One of the determinants of people's participation in self-help projects is assistance, especially from the government, since the government controls all resources available within the communities in the entire country. Publicity is another determinant of people's participation, especially by the project initiators, if the project is not identified by the people. The leadership style adopted by a community influences its community development efforts. It has been accepted and documented that the success of any development programme depends largely on the involvement and actual participation of the people themselves. Some communities have taken it upon themselves to change their conditions for better and are succeeding, while many others could hardly start any stage of development process. Thus study therefore, examined the people's participation and self-help projects for organization and community development in Akwanga Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

The present study was conducted with the broad objective of identifying and exposing the determinants of people's participation in community development towards self-help projects. The specific objectives include: to ascertain the people's participation in community development towards self-help projects; to assess the contribution of citizens to community development through self-help projects; to determine the factor that motivates people's participation in community development through self projects; and to identify the extent to which citizens are involved in self-help projects.

#### **The Study Area**

The study area Akwanga Local Government is one of the 13 Local Government Areas in Nasarawa State in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Local Government Area lies at latitude **9° 7' N** and **8° 9' N** of the equator and between longitude **8° and 8° 5' E** of the Greenwich meridian. It lies south west of the Jos plateau. The local government is bounded in the north by Kaduna state, in the south, by Nasarawa Eggon local government and in the east by Wamba local government, while in the west by Kokona local government. The headquarters of Akwanga local government area is Akwanga town. Figure 1 shows the location of Akwanga local government area in Nasarawa state and the location of Nasarawa state in Nigeria respectively.



Figures .1 (a) Location of the Study Area in Nasarawa State. (b) Location of Nasarawa State in Nigeria

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study to elicit information on people's participation and self- help projects for organization and community development in Akwanga Local Government Area, Nigeria. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select the sample from among the population. In doing this, Akwanga Local Government Area was stratified along the axis of the existing six communities that had self-help projects as at the time of the study.

From each of the communities, the proportionate sampling technique was used to select fifty respondents thus two hundred and fifty respondents were selected for the study. The main instrument used for data collection was a structured closed-ended questionnaire tagged "people's participation and self-help projects for organization and community development" (CPSHPOCDQ) carefully designed for the participating communities and sample. Prior to its being administered, the questions were scrutinized by some experts in community development, social work, rural and extension services. Based on their comments, some items were reworded, while some were modified to ensure that there were no ambiguities. Cronbach Alpha and Kuder Richardson (KR21) were used to provide reliability estimate of the instrument. KR21 was used for items that were dichotomously scored, while Cronbach Alpha was used for 3, 4 and 5 point items scales. In order to achieve this, a pilot study was carried out with a sample of 80 people in Kokona Local Government Area, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The result of reliability coefficient was  $r = 0.89$ . This result indicates that the instrument used for data collection is reliable. Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) \ was used to analyze the data to measure the relationship, using a 0.05 level of significance.

## Discussions of Results

The results are discussed in line with the research questions.

Research Question 1: To what extent did these factors (giving some form of assistance to your community, initiators sensitizing you through publicity, your financial involvement being within your ability, having dynamic and trustworthy leaders of the entire community affect people's participation through self-help project? The result is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:  $x^2$  To what extent did these factors given some form of assistance to your community?**

Item	$x^2$ Cal	Df	$x^2$ Tab	Sig (2 tailed)
Form of assistance	16.986	3	7.81	0.000
Sensitized through publicity	10.268	3	7.81	0.002
Financial involvement within your ability	12.716	3	7.81	0.001
Leaders were very dynamic and trustworthy	33.956	3	7.81	0.000
Involves all disadvantage group	15.729	3	7.81	0.000
Solve specific bad situation	29.762	3	7.81	0.000

Source: Field Survey, 2014

In table 1, all the items were significant at 0.05 level. This implies that there is a strong relationship between those factors and the respondents' involvement or participation in community development through self-help projects. Citizens' participation could be enhanced with very dynamic and trustworthy leader. Table 1 shows that 72% felt that their leaders were very dynamic and trustworthy while only 28% believed otherwise. Proper leadership training could be given to these leaders so that they would understand their citizens' expectations of them so as to win the confidence and trust of their people. This is corroborated with the findings of Anyanwu (1999), that publicity is a determinant of citizens' participation, especially by the project initiators, if the project is not identified by the people. The leadership style adopted by a community influences its community development efforts.

## Research Question 2

To what extent did the people's participation affect community development through self-help projects?

Table 2 shows that  $x^2_{tab} = 21.03$  at 0.05 level of significance for the item "ensures project efficiency". "Increase project effectiveness" had  $x^2_{cal} = 40.688 > x^2_{tab} = 21.03$  at 0.05 level of significance. Also, "ensures proper need identification and execution" had  $x^2_{cal} = 32.05 > x^2_{tab} = 21.03$  at 0.05 level. "Enhances project sustainability", "enables project cost sharing" and "raises the level of beneficiaries' empowerment" were all significant at 0.05 level. This result, therefore, indicates the need for those concerned to sustain these citizens' participation spirit in the citizens for continual and more improvement in the projects.

**Table 2: To what extent did people's participation affect community development through self-help projects?**

Item	$x^2_{Cal}$	Df	$x^2_{tab}$	Sig (2 tailed)
Ensures project efficiencies	47.558	12	21.03	0.000
Increase project effectiveness	40.688	12	21.03	0.000
Ensures project need identification and execution	32.057	12	21.03	0.000
Enhances project sustainability	41.434	12	21.03	0.000
Enable project cost sharing	48.058	12	21.03	0.000
Raises the level of beneficiary's	38.509	12	21.03	0.000

**Table 3: To what extent did the citizens derive benefits through self-help projects?**

Item	$x^2_{Cal}$	Df	$x^2_{tab}$	Sig (tailed)
Help to analyze and solve community's problem(s)	12.184	6	14.45	0.000
The act of negotiating and persuasion?	28.238	6	14.45	0.000
The skills and technology acquisition zeal?	23.037	6	14.45	0.000
The act of members coming together to work for common purpose?	33.239	6	14.45	0.000
The ability to link up with other community or agencies for assistance for your community development	26.149	6	14.45	0.000
The ability to evolve alternative lines of action and choose one	14.851	6	14.45	0.000
The ability to generate income strategy	40.771	6	14.45	0.000

Source: Field survey, 2014

There was a significant relationship between the community's ability to generate income Strategy and their participation in community development through self-help projects (see Tables 2 & 3). This is in line with the findings of Osuji, (2004) who sees citizens' participation in terms of development as the engagement of project community members in all the various decision-making processes regarding development programmes in their areas. This is also in support of the findings of Anyanwu (1999) that participation implies that the workers have to supply the necessary and needed stimulus needed for the project's success.

The result in research question one indicates that there is a significant relationship between giving some form of assistance to your community, initiators sensitizing you through publicity, your financial involvement being within your ability, having dynamic and trustworthy leaders, involving all categories of disadvantaged groups and project solving a specific bad situation of the entire community and people's participation through self help project. Anyanwu (1999) asserts that publicity is a determinant of people's participation, especially by the project initiators, if the project is not identified by the people. The leadership style adopted by a community influences its community development efforts. It was also discovered in research question two that there is a significant relationship between people's participation and *community development through self-help projects*. This is supported by the findings of Okafor (2000), that

## empowerment

Source: Field survey, 2014

This is supported by the findings of Okafor (2000), that there is need to identify and encourage the various factors that enhance the people's participation in self-help projects so as to ensure the people's continuous participation in community development projects. This will aid the development of our various communities which will consequently reduce the rural-urban migration rate to the barest minimum in Nigeria.

## Research Question 3

To what extent did the citizens derive benefits through self-help projects?

As shown in Table 3, all responses to the research question shows that all items responses were significant since  $x^2_{cal} > x^2_{tab}$  at 0.05 level. The skills and technology acquisition zeal at  $x^2_{cal} = 23.037 > x^2_{tab} = 14.45$  at 0.05 level. 475 out of 500 agreed that their community had developed the ability to link up with other communities or agencies for the assistance in their community development efforts. As many as 220 respondents or 88% of the sample agreed that their communities had developed the ability to evolve many lines of action and were able to choose one for proper address. The act of negotiation and persuasion and the act of members coming together to work for a common purpose denote a significant relationship to the citizens' participation in self-help project towards community development. (See Tables 1, 2 & 3).

there is need to identify and encourage the various factors that enhance the people's participation in self-help projects, so as to ensure the citizens' continual participation in community development projects, as this would aid the development of our various communities which would invariably reduce the rural-urban migration rate to the barest minimum in Nigeria. Research question three revealed that there is significant relationship between citizens' derived benefits and their participation in community development through self-help projects. This is in line with the findings of Osuji (2004), who sees citizens' participation in terms of development, as the engagement in project by community members in all the various decision-making processes regarding development programmes in their areas. This also conforms with Anyanwu's (1999) view that participation implies that the workers have to supply the necessary and needed stimulus needed for project's success

## Implications of the Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the act of negotiation and persuasion and the act of members coming together to work for a common purpose denotes a significant relationship to the citizens' participation in self-help project towards community development. The findings of the study also have implications for community development planners, policy makers, non-governmental agencies, and other stakeholders participating in development planning and design, and service delivery system. It ensures that the communities

develop the ability to evolve many lines of action and are able to choose one for proper address. Furthermore, it enables their community to develop the ability to link up with other communities or agencies for assistance in their community development efforts.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has established that self-help project is an organ of national and community development programme, which has contributed to improvement in the standard of living of our communities especially the rural communities. The study has also had established that there is development of human and resources, which enhances the living standard of the people. This implies that people's participation is a method that enables projects to be built around the felt-needs of the citizens through the people's mobilization of both human and material resources within themselves and their communities for the development of their communities. The study has equally established the fact that people's participation serves as a major method for sustainable development and improvement in the standard of living of the people. Proper leadership training could be given to these leaders so that they would understand their citizens' expectations of them so as to win the confidence and trust of their people. Furthermore, there is need for those concerned to sustain people's participation spirit in the citizens for continuous and more improvement in the above items.

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