

## Sustainable Community Development Programmes in Socially Diverse Nigerian Communities

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**Abstract:** The success of community development programmes has been found to be extensively influenced by people's ownership and participation. Studies had established that the diverse social backgrounds as well as the character of people's belief, attitude and general ways of life affect their worldview and consequently their participation in community development programmes. However, there is a paucity of information on the extent to which this holds true in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study examines sustainable community development programmes in socially diverse Nigerian communities. The study adopted a survey research design of ex-post facto type. A total of 1424 respondents resident in urban communities of Lagos state were selected through purposive and simple random sampling techniques. A set of questionnaires titled, Social Factors and Peoples Participation scale was used to obtain data for the study. Two research questions were generated and answered. Data were analyzed through simple percentages and Multiple Regression Analysis. Social factors (Membership of social organizations, income, education and language spoken) jointly influenced people's participation in community development programmes ( $R = 0.64, p < 0.05$ ). These factors accounted for 64% direct influence in relation to the dependent variable. The relative contributions of the variables are as follows: membership of social organizations ( $\beta = 0.25, p < 0.05$ ); income ( $\beta = 0.20, p < 0.05$ ); education ( $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ) and language spoken ( $\beta = 0.16, p < 0.05$ ). Based on these findings, the study recommends that social organizations within the community should be adequately mobilised for effective planning and execution of community development programmes.

**Key words:** Community development, peoples participation, social diversities, mobilised, organization, ex-post facto type

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### INTRODUCTION

The social environment into which an individual is born and raised forms a strong platform upon which his or her way of life and general world view is formed. Such an environment having being imbibed by the individual creates a stage or benchmark from which he or she judges, acts, reacts and relates with other people and things around him or her.

Hence social environments turn out to be a determinant of people's attitudes. In urban communities, people from diverse social background have over the years migrated and settled into various communities. In the course of relating with one another within the community, there is usually a display of diverse attitudinal patterns depicting their social backgrounds. These diverse pattern of behavior becomes more pronounced when there is the need to take a corporate decision or a demand for participation of all and sundry within the community in community development programmes. Participation of the people in community development is of great importance if a project is to succeed. However,

prevailing social factors such as education, income, membership of social organizations and diversity of language spoken, influence the thinking and the attitude of the people towards effective participation.

Due to differing social backgrounds, people naturally react differently to community development programmes. It is however important that no one be left behind in the process of developing the community just because they have differing views. Rather there should be a way of accommodating the various views.

A number of studies have been carried out on people's participation in community development in homogeneous rural communities however, the view of a social diversities and its effect on the practice of community development in heterogeneous Nigerian societies has not been adequately addressed. This necessitates a search for a framework by which anticipations can be made on what happens when people from different social backgrounds come together to make a decision. To this end, this study explores sustainable community development programmes in socially diverse Nigerian communities.

**Community participation in development programmes:**

**A justification:** Njoh (2002) justified the need for community participation in development by identifying that it promotes better decision making; enables project to be built on the strength, tradition, beliefs and values of the communities and it brings about a sense of project ownership and sustainability because of the psychological motivation that participation brings. These objectives of participation can be categorized into three including functional objective which relate to participation leading to increase in efficiency and project effectiveness; empowering objective leading to capacity development of the people and philosophical objective which is the aspect of participation allowing the expression alternative views of people (Mosquera *et al.*, 2001).

Discussing the effectiveness of community participation in development programmes Samuel (1987) asserted that community participation will be regarded as relatively successful when the following conditions are met: project objective is directed at empowering beneficiaries and building their capacities, the design of the project call for interaction among beneficiaries as a basis for identifying needs and preferences, implementation of project's requires dialogue and interaction among beneficiaries, users rather than a weak bureaucracy to manage part of the project.

Samuel (1987) highlighted nine reasons why community participation has become necessary in implementation of development programmes. The reasons include, more will be accomplished; services can be provided at lower cost; participation is a catalyst for further development efforts; participation leads to a sense of responsibility for the project; it guarantees that a felt need is involved; it ensures that things are done in the right ways makes use of indigenous knowledge and expertise provide freedom from dependence on professionals and fosters peoples understanding of the nature of the constraints which hinder their escape from poverty.

From societal transformation perspective, Stieglitz (2002) was of the view that participation is necessary for a fully effective, society-wide development transformation. It is not only that participation brings to the project relevant information that outside development agencies or even government are not likely to have but participation also brings with it commitment and commitment brings with it greater efforts, the kind of effort that is required to make the project successful.

Discussing the expected effects of community participation, Askew (1989) noted that it could lead to improved service availability by ensuring greater accessibility and better follow-up. Also it can reduce the social distance between service providers and users.

Apart from these effects, community participation can provide room for increased demand for service and greater responsibility by the community members take part in the planning and management of projects enhances their contribution to project financing and sustainability.

It is however important to note that community participation can offer different benefits for beneficiaries of a project, the communities, organizations and to the professionals. While the citizens may perceive it in terms of their overall empowerment, the professionals may look only at the advantages it offers to their project success. It is also evidence that genuine participation can be perceived as that which transcends contribution of labour and material resources but incorporates meaningful participation in decision-making processes as they affect the project.

In summary, community participation can empower people, mobilize resources and energy, develop holistic and integrated approaches, achieve better decisions and more effective services and endure ownership and sustainability of programme.

**Role of education in community development:** To the new encyclopaedia britannica education is seen as the transmission of the values and accumulated knowledge of a society. In this sense it is equivalent to what the social scientists term socialization or enculturation. Children are born without culture. Education is designed to guide them in learning a culture, moulding their behaviour in the ways of adulthood and directing them towards their eventual role in the society. In line with the above submissions, it could be claimed that education plays the role of an agent of culture in other words it is the means whereby the culture of a particular society is inherited, changed (for better) and transmitted to the young members of the society. Education could therefore be seen as a continuous process which the society establishes to assist its members to understand the heritage of the past and to participate productively in the future.

Education has become more important today than ever before. It helps people to acquire the skill they need for everyday activities such as managing their money, reading newspapers and so on. Education is important because it helps people increase their knowledge of the world acquire skills that enable them live more interesting and enjoyable. Education also helps people to adjust to change. This benefit has become increasingly important because social changes today take place with increasing speed and affects the lives of more people. Education can help a person understand these and provide the skills to adjust to these changes (World Bank, 2006).

An educated community dweller would respond better to voluntary community development project than an uneducated member. People are reluctant to participate in community activity when they do not have enough education or information to act responsibly. Issues such as electrification require knowledge that many people do not have. They simply do not know how to act. Thus, they will avoid participation as long as possible or until they have what they believe to be sufficient information. If forced, they will usually act negatively. People will act only after they have time to think about and discuss an issue. Again, they will participate responsibly in community affairs if they understand the issue. When they do not understand, people act on limited information and opposition will occur. Hence in the submission of Wulflhorst and Karen (1990) and people will participate in a community activity when they have better knowledge of an issue or situation.

**Income: the power to effective participation:** According to Sen (1999), inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life. People respond in different ways and view the world around them based on their levels of income. Hence people that fall within a higher income level feel more comfortable participating in voluntary community development programmes than those with lesser income since they can of convenience suggest community development ideas and back such suggestions with their monetary contributions. The above submission is in line with that of Lane (1959), Milbrath (1965), Stern and Noel (1973), Kellert (1980) and who are of the opinion that active participation of members of a group or community is directly related to socio-economic status of members.

Defee submitted that the reasons for the disparity in the attitudes of those with higher incomes against those in lesser bracket are reflected in their values, expectations and life style. These differences tend to make those with lesser income feels uncomfortable. This, in their opinion is because people will voluntarily participate in a community development activity when they feel comfortable in the community. Furthermore, Inglehart (1997), Sen (1999), Fairbanks (2000) and Beard (2004) submitted that Poverty affects tolerance of others, support of civil liberties and openness toward foreigners; it affects positive relationships with subordinates, self-esteem and sense of personal competence; it also affects ones disposition to participate in community affairs, interpersonal trust and self-satisfaction. Thus inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life. A person's socio-economic background has some influence on his upbringing and consequently on his attitude and predisposition on

several issues and events. In the same vein, in judging whether the economy of a nation is doing well or poorly, there is usually a comparison between the total income of everyone in the economy with another one or with the global economy. Hence participation in community projects requires dwellers in a community to contribute resources and the poor are either reluctant or unable to invest scarce resources in endeavours that they perceive as risky.

**Membership of social organization and community development:** Social organization refers to a group of social positions, connected by social relations, performing a social role. It can also be defined in a narrower sense as any institution in a society that works to socialize the groups or people in it. Common examples include education, governments, families, economic systems, religions and any people or groups that individuals have social interaction with. It is a major sphere of social life organized to meet some human needs.

They are patterns of relationships (role, status) which are expected to be maintained with regards to certain rules and regulations with a focus and functions to be performed and to bring about social change/order. Social organizations can take many forms depending on the social context. For example for family context the corresponding social organization is the extended family. In the business context a social organization may be an enterprise, company, corporation, etc. In the educational context, it may be a school, university, etc. In the political context it may be a government, political party, etc. Commonly, experts officially recognize these five major social institutions that have been evident in some way in every civilization in history: government, religion, education, economy and family.

The norms or ways of behavior of residents in a particular community may be inherited from the past or developed out of self-conscious behaviors of members as they attempt to maintain their identity and survival in a particular environment. There is a group awareness of shared social consciousness; common needs common services, etc. within an effective social organization which is aimed at higher living standards (Anyanwu, 2002).

Commenting on the influence of membership of social organization on participation in community development activities, Sills (1966) showed that citizen participation can be facilitated if people belong to groups with appropriate organizational structure. Hence the structures of the social organizations either enhance or hinder the participation of their members in community development programmes. Often time, most citizens are only partially involved in a particular community interest area. They

often feel incompetent to organize a community citizens response unless the reasons are compelling to their community's interest.

According to Anyanwu (2002), members are aware of the relationship status or positions, the roles, norms, duties and obligations as well as the privileges that result from group memberships. In line with this view, Okoye (1989) writes that the interaction of members of a group usually takes such a form that the behaviour of each member is changed by his or her group membership. This implies that membership to a social organization has a significant influence on the behaviours of group members both with and outside the group.

**Diversities of language spoken and community development:** Language is seen as the major vehicle of human interaction and relationship. According to Adegbola (2004), language is the medium within which the totality of human knowledge is coded. Language, according to Nwabueze (1991) is whatever one can do to pass a message onto another person either as gesture, sign, body movement, facial expression, cries spoken words and print. On the use of language in inter ethnic relationships in Nigeria, Sanda (1976), Bamishaye (1976) and Ugwuogbu (1994) are of the opinion that the language of a people is the number one means of identification of such a people.

Language gives a people a name and a sense of belonging. To this end the attitude or outlook of someone who speaks a language has a way of influencing others who speak same language. In participating in community development programmes, the active or passive attitude of one who speaks a particular language somehow influences others. Such a case is more pronounced if in that community people with same language have an association they belong or have one of theirs who is quite an opinion leader or highly esteemed by others.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**This study:** The study sought to ascertain participation in urban-based community development in Nigeria from social perspectives. Two research questions are addressed in the study. They are:

- How do the social factors influence people's participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state
- Which of the social factors has the greatest contributory effect on people's participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state?

**Population of the study:** The target population comprised adult members living in urban communities of Lagos state Nigeria. The choice of the Lagos state is based on the premise of her urban nature, due to her status as former Federal Capital city, Lagos state is seen as a cultural melting pot which attracts Nigerians and foreigners alike and this gives her a cosmopolitan character which is not found in any other state.

Again, Lagos state public private partnership project brochure in analyzing the current demographic trend showed that the Nigerian population growth rate was 4/5% and global aerial of 2% while Lagos State population growth rate is estimated at 8%. Consequently, Lagos state has a good representation of the various Nigerian societies. Moreover, because of the concentration of industries and companies in the state as well as her geographical location as a port of entry and exit from the country, Lagos state receives about 600,000 immigrants per annum.

This makes the population growth in the state one of the highest in the world. Consequently, Lagos state is seen as the commercial nerve centre of the nation, attracting people from all works of life to the state. The above points thus makes Lagos state a perfect setting for the study.

**Sample size and sampling technique of the study:** A multi stage sampling technique was employed for the study. The first stage involved the stratification of the state into three zones along the existing three senatorial districts. At the second stage the lottery method of the simple random sampling technique was employed to select three local government areas from each of the senatorial districts. At the third stage, the lottery method of the simple random sampling technique was again used to select four communities from each of the selected local government areas.

Finally at the fourth stage, the purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents from each of the communities. The number of respondents selected from each local government area was in proportion to the total population of each local government area used for the study. Out of 1800 copies of the questionnaires administered, 1424 were retrieved. Overall 79.1% of the copies of the questionnaires distributed were returned and were found useful for analysis.

**Instrumentation:** Respective respondents responded to a set of questionnaire tagged social factors and people's participation scale.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Research question 1:** How do the social factors influence people’s participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state?

Table 1 shows that all the variables used to measure social factors: education, income, language spoken and membership of social organization if taken together have a joint effect on people’s participation in community development programmes in urban communities. This is so because the significant level  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. Moreover the independent social variables accounted for 64% direct effect in relation to dependent variable.

The result revealed that the social factors when taken together are effective in determining people’s participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos State. The observed F-Ratio value of 243.843 at 0.05 level of significance is an indication that the effectiveness of the combination of the social factors in influencing people’s participation in community development programmes of urban communities of Lagos State Nigeria could not have been a matter of coincidence.

The degree of the relationship between peoples participation in community development projects in urban communities and a combination of the independent social variables is reflected in the values of the coefficient of Multiple Regression (R) of 0.64 and Multiple Regression Square ( $R^2$ ) 0.41 as shown in Table 1. It can therefore be said that 64% of the total variance in peoples participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state Nigeria is accounted for by a linear combination of the four social factors used in this study.

**Research question 2:** Which of the social factors has the greatest contributory effect on people’s participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state?

Table 2 shows that among the social factors, the variable with the strongest influence on people in participation in community development programmes is membership of social organizations ( $\beta = 0.26, p < 0.05$ ) this is followed by Income ( $\beta = 0.20, p < 0.05$ ). Next to this is Education ( $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ) and lastly Language Spoken ( $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ). The Table 2 thus reveals that each of the social variables used in this study has positive significant influences on the dependent variable. It reveals that membership of social organizations weighed the strongest influence scoring 26% followed by income with 20%, next is education with 17% and language spoken with 17%.

The result of the findings on research question 1 as shown in Table 1 shows that social factors have very strong influence in determining peoples participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state. The Table 1 shows that the four social variables (education, income, language spoken and membership of social organization) had significant contribution in influencing peoples, participation in community development programmes in Lagos state Nigeria.

In the value of the standardized regressions weights associated with these variables, respectively indicate that membership of social organization ( $\beta = 0.26, p < 0.05$ ) is the most effective contributor and is ranked first with 26% contribution, followed by income ( $\beta = 0.20, p < 0.05$ ), ranked second with 20% contribution; next is education ( $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ) and this is ranked third with 17% contribution while language spoken ( $\beta = 0.17, p < 0.05$ ) comes next with 17% contribution.

Table 1: Regression analysis showing how the social factors influence people’s participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state

Source of variation	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F-ratio	Sig. of P	R	$R^2$	Adj. $R^2$
Regression	757076.86	5	189269.215	243.843	0.000	0.638	0.407	0.406
Residual	1101418.40	1419	776.193					
Total	1858495.30	1424						

Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table 2: The contributory effect of each of the social factors on people’s participation in community development programmes in urban communities of in Lagos state

Variables	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient $\beta$ contributions	Ranking of the independent variables	t	Sig.
	$\beta$	SE ( $\beta$ )				
Constant	-56.368	6.760	-	-	-8.339	0.000
Education	2.126	0.341	0.171	3	6.240	0.000
Income	1.857	0.236	0.200	2	7.885	0.000
Language spoken	1.484	0.260	0.166	4	5.714	0.000
Membership of social organization	2.964	0.306	0.255S	1	9.679	0.000

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

The reason for this submission is that associations to which a person belongs play great roles in influencing members to acting or behaving in a particular way. Members in an organization are somewhat attached to one another, there is always a sense of belonging among group members and the tendency of carrying one another along in acting in a similar way most especially when issues at stake is viewed as external factor that has a bearing on the corporate existence of the organization. Again leaderships or influential members of an organization could easily mobilize or motivate members to participate in social activities such as participating in community development programmes. People are motivated to participate in an activity when they see their leaders of people they hold in esteem taking active part.

Based on this finding, the result of this study is in agreement with Sills (1966) whose submission on the importance of membership of social organization showed that citizen participation can be facilitated if people belong to groups with appropriate organizational structure. Hence the structures of the social organizations either enhance or hinder the participation of their members in community development programmes. Often time, most citizens are only partially involved in a particular community interest area. They often feel incompetent to organize a community citizens response unless the reasons are compelling to their community's interest. Thus, citizens will voluntarily participate in a community activity when they have an appropriate organizational structure available to them for expressing their interests. If they view the organization as cumbersome, time consuming, dictatorial or grossly inefficient, they will not join will withdraw after joining or their dissatisfaction may be evidenced by high absenteeism or a general unwillingness to be supportive or cooperative in group or community development activities. Some social groups or organizations that exist over time develop behavior patterns that may or may not encourage open participation of their members in community development programmes. They may even have written or verbal expressions which speak of their willingness for participation on the other hand, their behavior may be interpreted to the contrary. Furthermore creditability of those in the leadership or prominent members of a social organization is necessary for successful citizen participation. Hence, persons with stained reputations (dishonesty, questionable dealings and so on) may have equal difficulty organizing a community-wide development programme. Also in the submission of Beard (2004) the social, cultural and religious groups to which individuals belong increase or decrease the number of people they know and the number of people they

potentially engage in exchange relationships. It is therefore assumed that the members of dominant social groups are more likely to participate in civil society organizations.

The next important social factor that influence people's participation in community development programmes in urban communities was the level of Income. This showed that people that fall within a higher income level feel more comfortable participating in voluntary community development programmes than those with lesser income since they can of convenience suggest community development ideas and back such suggestions with their monetary contributions. The above submission is in line with that of Lane (1959), Milbrath (1965), Stern and Noel (1973), Kellert (1980) who are of the opinion that active participation of members of a group or community is directly related to socio-economic status of members. In their opinion people with lower incomes, less education, less occupation status and lower levels of living are less likely to participate in voluntary associations than persons in higher brackets. Furthermore, Beard (2004) concludes that Participation in civil society organizations (and community development) means contributing time and/or money, an individual's economic status will affect his or her level of involvement.

Also the result of this study is in agreement with the Defee who submitted that reasons for the disparity in the attitudes of those with higher incomes and more education against those in lesser bracket are reflected in their values, expectations and life style. These differences tend to make those with lesser income and education feels uncomfortable. This, in their opinion is because citizens will voluntarily participate in a community development activity when they feel comfortable in the community. Furthermore, This result is also in agreement with Inglehart (1997), Sen (1999), Fairbanks (2000) and Beard (2004) who submitted that poverty affects tolerance of others, support of civil liberties and openness toward foreigners; it affects positive relationships with subordinates, self-esteem and sense of personal competence; it also affects ones disposition to participate in community affairs, interpersonal trust and self-satisfaction. In addition that inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life. A person's socio-economic background has some influence on his upbringing and consequently on his attitude and predisposition on several issues and events. In the same vein in judging whether the economy of a nation is doing well or poorly, there is usually a comparison between the total income of everyone in the economy with another one or with the global economy. Consequently, participation in community projects requires dwellers in a community to

contribute resources and the poor are either reluctant or unable to invest scarce resources in endeavors that they perceive as risky. Based on the earlier, findings of this study agrees with the submissions of Inglehart (1997) and Fairbanks (2000) that low income (Poverty) affects tolerance of others, support of civil liberties and ones disposition to participate in community affairs.

Furthermore, this study revealed that among the social factors, level of Education played a significant contribution in determining the attitude of people towards participation in community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state. This observation is however not surprising because people respond in different ways and view the world around them based on their educational level. An educated community dweller would respond better to voluntary community development project than an uneducated member. People are reluctant to participate in community activity when they do not have enough education or information to act responsibly. Issues such as electrification require knowledge that many people do not have. They simply do not know how to act. Thus, they will avoid participation as long as possible or until they have what they believe to be sufficient information. If forced, they will usually act negatively. It is not uncommon for community leaders and professionals to spend months or even years, studying or debating an issue or complex problem. After forming what they consider to be a reasonable solution, it is thrust upon the citizens of a community with the expectation that they should immediately act upon it. Understanding does not come from information or knowledge alone. It comes from weighing information against previous knowledge and experience as well as analyzing one's perception of the situation. People will act only after they have time to think about and discuss an issue. Again, they will participate responsibly in community affairs if they understand the issue. When they do not understand, citizens act on limited information and opposition will occur. In the submission of *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* education leads to healthier, more productive populations. Consequently people with more education are generally more productive to the growth and development of their communities in particular and the society at large than those with no formal or non-formal education. Hence in the submission of Wulflhorst and Karen (1990), Citizens will voluntarily participate in a community activity when they have better knowledge of an issue or situation.

Results further revealed that among the social factors, Language Spoken contributed 17% while the FGDs ranked it as having the least influence in determining attitude of people towards community development programmes in urban communities of Lagos state. This is in agreement with the submissions of Sanda (1976), Bamishaye (1976) and Ugwuegbu (1994) on the use

of language in inter ethnic relationships in Nigeria. The language of a people is the number one means of language between members of different ethnic identification of such a people. It gives a people a name and a sense of belonging. To this end the attitude or outlook of someone who speaks a language has a way of influencing others who speak same language. In participating in community development programmes, the active or passive attitude of one who speaks a particular language somehow influences others. Such a case is more pronounced if in that community people with same language have an association they belong or have one of theirs who is quite an opinion leader or highly esteemed by others. The opinion of leaders of the association and the opinion leaders would greatly affect the disposition of most if not all the people that speak that language towards participation in community development programmes. Language has a binding effect on people especially in societal settings where there are other languages being spoken as is the case of plural communities like Lagos state. This binding effect automatically develops into factions, cliques or a group who wants a voice in the larger community level. Hence an outspoken Effik, Hausa, Yoruba or Igbo opinion leader could easily appeal to the sense of emotion of fellow members of his/her language since there already exists a sense of brotherhood nesses.

To this end most members of that language group would tend to tow their line of action in participating in community development programmes. Hence interpersonal relationships among community dwellers in a plural society are significantly influenced by linguistic identifications. The study was able to confirm that once a direct communication is rendered impossible through groups, each is likely to go their own way. This shows that those who share the same language relate better.

## **CONCLUSION**

Community development programmes are people centred and for effectiveness of policies related to this field, social diversities obtainable with a particular society must be taken into cognizance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made:

- In planning community development programmes social organizations within the community should be properly mobilized. There should also be adequate representation of the various languages spoken within the community in other to foster a sense of identification of all groups with the programme

- Finally, for positive participation in community development programmes, the various levels of education and income of the people within the community should be taken into cognizance

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