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AN ASSESSMENT OF CITIZENS PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN AUCHI, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Community development projects are essential for improving the quality of life and fostering sustainable growth in a community. However, effective implementation and success of these projects heavily depend on active citizen participation. This research explores an assessment of citizens participation in community development project in Auchi. The objectives of the study are; identify some existing projects carried out through citizens participation, examine the strategies adopted in carryout the projects, Assess the impacts of the projects in the area, and identify some of the [redacted] challenges faced by citizens in participating in community development projects. Research methodology, both primary and secondary sources of data were adopted .sample size .one hundred (100) respondents were examined with a structured questionnaire, but a total o f ninety seven (97) questionnaires was retrieved and find suitable for analysis. The study identifies key

Key words: Assessment, Citizens, Participation, Community, Development.

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barriers such as lack of awareness, limited access to resources, socio-economic constraints, and inadequate support from local authorities, as the major hindrance to effective citizenships participation in community development .Conclusively, the researcher concludes that provision of incentive, interest in development, felt-need motive, participatory in decision making and so on are the motivating factors of citizens participation in community development. The study therefore recommends that citizens should always involve in decision-making process, and they should be educated about their roles. By addressing these barriers, the study seeks to contribute to more effective and sustainable community development practices.

Introduction

In developing countries, citizens are faced with bad governance under numerous and different administrations with consequential effects on developments that impact their individual welfare and national economy at large (Oyedele, 2012). Most especially, development of fundamental public facilities such as roads, water supply, basic health facilities, education and so on...Were often carried out with little or no grassroots inputs at all levels. Under both military and democratic systems, governments of these nations had oftentimes embraced top-down approach, which is a non-citizen participatory approach, focusing on absolute inputs of government in policy formulation, decision making and project development phases: conception, initiation, design and implementation (Hughes, 2021).

Despite this approach, African countries are experiencing retrogression in various aspects of development. The reason according to Njoh (2002) is that top-down development efforts by African governments have a long term commitment problem regarding fundamental African issues. These entail educating and mobilizing the grassroots to accept responsibilities for resolving the continent's problems; empowering Africans to develop the character, capability and technology needed in tackling her problems; and

linking the disorganized and isolated development efforts in Africa into an integrated system for more effectiveness. On occasions where citizens are to be included in pro-development processes, they are neither involved in decision making nor policy formulation, but invariably at the project implementation phase (Chirenje, L., Giliba, R., Musamba, E. 2012).

There was, however, a wide recognition in the past and still is at present that citizen engagement is critical to achieving sustainability of developments. Narayan (2013) opined the involvement of the public as stakeholders intimately in all aspects of projects implies less risk of inappropriate design, under-use and long periods of disrepair, since sustaining new facilities goes beyond physical construction that will later become dysfunctional with use. Onibokun and Faniran (2015) observed that "nations cannot be built without the popular support and full participation of the people, nor can the economic condition of a society be improved without the full and effective contribution, creativity and popular enthusiasm of the vast majority of people." Many more assertions have indicated that any development project, whose initiation, design, goal setting, decision making and management phase's people (end-users) are not involved in, may not attain sustainability (Okunmadewa, 2021). It is to this end that this study was conducted in Auchi, Edo State

Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to assess the role of citizens in community development project in Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area, Edo State.

The objectives of the study are to:

i. Identify some existing projects carried out through citizen's participations in the area.
ii. Examine the strategies adopted by the citizens in the development of their community.

iii. Assess the impact of citizen's participation in the development of Auchi.
iv. Proffer solution to address the challenges of citizen's participation in decision-making on community development projects in Auchi.

Study Area

Auchi is a town in Edo state, Nigeria, and as a study area, it presents a unique combination of cultural, economic, and geographic characteristics. Auchi is the headquarter of Etsako-West local government area of Edo-State. Auchi is a small city that is still growing and changing; there are a lot of opportunities for community development, but also a lot of challenges. As at 1991 population census, its population was estimated at 42,610 persons. Auchi is a home to a diverse population, which means there are different perspectives and needs to consider. The study area has experienced rapid urbanization in recent years, which has created new challenges and opportunities. Other towns in the Etsako West local government area include: Uzairue, South-Ibie, Agbede and the Anwain Clan. During the British colonial rule, it was the headquarters of the Kukuruku Division, the administrative headquarters of five districts. The town is also regarded as the administrative capital of the Afemai region of Edo North and the Edo North senatorial district of Nigeria. It is also the home of Auchi Polytechnic. The language spoken by the Auchi people is 'Yekhè' or Etsako amongst the Afenmai language. It is an Edo language dialect or variant. The study area has its environs fall into the savannah vegetation belt of southern Nigeria. The vegetation here is prominently made up of sparsely distributed trees, shrubs, and grasses. Auchi town is divided into five grand quarters which could also be referred to as districts; these are in turn made up of 25 villages.

The five grand quarters are:

- Utsogun
- Akpekpe
- Aibotse

- Igbei
- Iyekhei

The study was carried out in the five major grand quarters listed above. This enable the researcher to ascertain some critical issues related to citizens participation and community development in the study area.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey research is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few or items (sample) considered representative of the entire group. Amini (2011) stated that in survey design, a sample of population is used and this permits generalization of results to the target population.

The data for this research were sourced from both primary and secondary source. Primary data are first hand data collected directly from the study area. It was obtained through direct observation, interview, and administration of structured questionnaire to get relevant information concerning the study.

While secondary source of data are the second hand data obtained from published and unpublished materials, text books, internet materials ,journals , newspaper, seminar papers, and such other related materials bordering on the issues at hand.

Population of the Study

According to National Population Commission (NPC 1991) Auchi community has a population of 42,610 in 1991. For the purpose of the study, the population is therefore projected to 2024 using 3.0% growth rate so as to get the present population number of the study area. The population figure of Auchi community at present is computed 112,917 persons.

The formula for sample size determination is demonstrated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample Size
N = Population of the Study Area
1 = Constant (1)
e = Level of Significance (0.10) ^{2}
The detail of the calculation will be shown in appendix II.

Table 1. Sample selection per quarter

S/N	Quarters	Population	Projected pop.(2024)	Statistical analysis	Sample size
1	Akpekpe	12,356	32,743	$\frac{0.09 \times 32,743}{100}$	29
2	Iyekhei	10,224	27,094	$\frac{0.09 \times 27,093}{100}$	24
3	Utsogun	6,820	18,073	$\frac{0.09 \times 18,073}{100}$	16
4	Igbei	5,540	14,681	$\frac{0.09 \times 14,681}{100}$	13
5	Aibotse	7,670	20,326	$\frac{0.09 \times 20,326}{100}$	18
	Total	42,610	112,917		100

Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The study employed stratified sampling techniques to share the area into quarters, thus, the area is shared into different strata. Simple random sampling techniques were employed in administering the questionnaires within the study area. Each quarter was sampled using systematic random sampling techniques whereby every member of the community has equal chance of being selected for the study.

Results and Discussion

Data Presentation

Data collections are presented with frequency tables and simple percentage which shows the response of the respondents to the questionnaires.

Table 2. Respondent demography

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Male	41	42.27
Female	56	57.73
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 3. Age Distribution of Respondent

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18 years	8	8.25
19 – 29	45	46.39
30 – 49	28	28.87
50 and above	16	16.49
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 4. Marital Status of Respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Single	29	29.90
Married	57	58.76
Widow/widower	3	3.09
Divorced	8	8.25
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 5. Educational Qualification Distribution of Respondents.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
School leaving certificate	49	50.52
OND/HND/BSc	39	40.21
MSc	-	-

No formal education	9	9.28
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 6. Occupational Status Distribution of Respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Civil servant	17	17.53
Student	20	20.62
Trader	36	37.11
Farmer	18	18.56
Others specify	6	6.19
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 7. Income Level Distribution of Respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Less than ₦50,000	78	80.41
₦51,000-₦100,000	13	13.40
₦101,000 and above	6	6.19
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 8. the natures of project executed through citizen participation?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Market	12	12.37
Mosque	27	27.84
School	8	8.25
Borehole	35	36.08
Others specify	15	15.46
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 9. What are the strategies adopted by citizens for the development of their community?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Voluntary donation	17	17.53
Communal labor	30	30.93
Government support	12	12.37
Private agency	30	30.93

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Fund raising lunching	8	8.25
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 10. How effective do you think these strategies adopted by citizens have developed the community?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	62	63.92
Moderately effective	23	23.71
Slightly effective	12	12.37
Less effective	-	-
Total	**97**	**100**

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Table 11. What factor contributed to the effectiveness of these strategies?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Strong community leadership	51	52.58
Effective communication	8	8.25
Clear objectives and planning	10	10.31
Cultural sensitivity and inclusiveness	28	28.87
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 12. What possible changes have you observed in Auchi as a result of citizen participation in development projects?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Increased income of citizens	7	7.22
Increased access to better medical treatment	-	-
Increased business activity	30	30.93
Access to portable water supply	25	25.77
Increased cooperation among community members	26	26.80

Others specify	9	9.28
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 13. What challenges have you experienced or observed regarding citizen participation in decision-making on community development projects in Auchi?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of awareness about the projects	35	36.08
Lack of transparency in the decision-making process	13	13.40
Limited skills or knowledge among citizens	37	38.14
Others specify	12	12.37
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 14. What specific aspects of the decision-making process are the most hindered by these challenges?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Identifying community needs	40	41.24
Planning and design of projects	33	34.02
Implementation of projects	24	24.74
Total	**97**	**100**

Table 15. What measures do you think could be taken to overcome these challenges and enhance citizen participation in decision-making?

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Improved communication and information dissemination	39	40.21
Greater transparency and accountability from authorities	15	15.46
More inclusiveness and representative	29	29.90

participation opportunities		
Others specify	14	14.43
Total	**97**	**100**

Discussion of Findings

The study shows that majority of the inhabitants were aware of community development initiative that have been driven by citizens efforts. Those that aware represented 65 (67.10%) while those that claimed not aware represented 32 (32.99% .

The natures of project executed through citizen participation were numerous in the study Area. Bore hole had the highest respondent with 35 (36.8%) followed by mosque 27(27.84%) , market 12 (12.37%), school 8 (8.25%) and so on . There are a lot of factors which motivated them to participate in the development of their community, such as interest in community development, encouragement from others, desire to contribute and so on. The strategies adopted by citizens for the development of their community. Communal labor and private agency had the highest respondent 30 (30.94%) followed by voluntary donation 17 (17.53%) and lastly , fund raising lunching 8 (8.25%). More so, the citizens claimed that the strategies was very effective. The study revealed that there are a lot of improvement in the study Area as a result of citizens participation in development projects , such as improve in socio economic activities , access to portable water supply, adequate cooperation among the community members and so on. Despite the numerous effects of community participation in development project, the study shows that there are some challenges faced by the citizens in actualizing their goals, such as limited skill s or knowledge among citizens represented by 37 (38.14%), followed by lack of awareness about the projects represented by 35 (36.08%) , lack of transparency in the decision making process represented by 13(13. 40%) . These challenges serve as an obstacle towards identifying community needs, planning and design of projects, and implementation of projects. The findings revealed that to over

come the challenges, the following measures should be taking. Improved communication and information dissemination which represented 39(40.21%), followed by inclusiveness and representative participation opportunities 29 (29.90%) , transparency and accountability 15 (15. 46%) and so on. Haven critically reviewed some related literature coupled with interview carried out; the study revealed that citizens' participation in decision-making has positive influence on community development projects. This findings is in collaboration with Barikor (2019), who observed that participatory decision making is accompanied by greater ego involvement, greater identification with organizational or community goals and that participation in decision making is an important factor in development of every community or organization.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that provision of incentives, interest in development, felt-need motive, participatory decision-making, empowerment, adequate information about community development projects, sense of ownership and goals compatibility are motivating factors of citizen's participation in community development. The study will deduced that the effect of these motivating factors contributed to active participation of the people in community development projects. It is also capable of leading to active participation of members in community development projects in the area. The existences of these motivating factors of citizen's participation are also ways that improve participation of the people. The researcher also concluded that participatory decision-making in development project, leadership cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders, differences in terms of goals, interest and needs, desire for self-help, lack of participatory planning in deigning of community development projects affect leaders in community development projects and also communication among all stakeholders and with community members

incentives, leadership cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders, partnership between stakeholders and organizations.

Overcoming the challenges of citizen participation in community development is both complex and imperative. By understanding and addressing the diverse obstacles that hinder engagement, communities can ensure that development initiatives are more inclusive, reflective of community needs, and ultimately more effective. Fostering a participatory culture is essential for building resilient and thriving communities where every member has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from collective progress.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and Non-governmental agencies (NGOs) should always involve the citizens in terms of decision-making process so as to encourage public participation and enhance community project implementation and function.
2. The citizens should cooperate and work in collaboration with community project developers so as to secure the growth and development of their communities.
3. Implement capacity-building programs aimed at enhancing leadership, project management, and technical skills among community members. These programs should be accessible, inclusive, and tailored to the specific needs of the community.
4. Ensure that communication channels are accessible to all community members by using multiple languages, and utilizing diverse communication methods such as community radio, social media, and face-to-face meetings.
5. Educate and raise awareness among citizens about their roles and responsibilities in community development and establish mechanisms for citizen feedback and complaints to ensure accountability and responsiveness.

6. Foster trust and encourage citizen participation in decision-making processes through transparent and accountable governance.

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