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RURAL YOUTHS PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN IDEATO NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF IMO STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT :

Rural youth play a vital role in driving community development, yet their level of participation often determines the success or failure of such initiatives. This study examined rural youth participation in community development project in Ideato North Local Government Area (Imo State Government, 2020). of Imo State, Nigeria. The objective were the perceived reasons for participation in community development projects and Perceived constraints in youth participation in community development projects. A multistage sampling technique were used to select communities and data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to 60 youths in the study area. The study revealed that youth perceived reasons for participation in community development projects are increase income economic activities with mean score of 3.90, for employment generation 3.60, increased income generation 3.42 and improve the infrastructure in the community 3.06 ,also perceived constraints such as projects not based on people's needs with mean score 3.15, low social status 3.70, corruption among the executives (Olori & Okide, 2014). 3.18, inadequate funding 3.45, exclusion from project planning 2.88. The study concluded that while youths contribute significantly to community development, their participation can be enhanced through improve capacity building, access to resources, and inclusion in leadership structures. it recommended that government ,non-governmental agencies and community leaders should create enabling environment and incentives that encourage sustained youth participation in community development projects.

INTRODUCTION

Community development is a collective process (Ayuba, 2012; Nwaiwu, Hamsan, & Abu Samah, 2014). through which members of a community identify their needs, mobilize resources, and implement strategies to improve their living conditions. in developing countries like Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019)., community development projects often serve as essential mechanisms for addressing infrastructural deficits, poverty alleviation, and sustainable livelihoods. The active involvement of various groups, particularly the youths determines the sustainability and success of these projects. Rural youths constitute (Ajiye, Farinde, & Osu, 2023). a significant proportion of Nigeria's population and represents the most energetic and resourceful segment of society. Their roles in community development projects are crucial, as they often provide the labor force, creativity and innovation ideas needed for execution. Youths are commonly engage in activities such as environmental sanitation (Nwaiwu et al., 2014)., road and school construction, agricultural development programmes and health campaigns. Despite their potentials contributions, their participation is sometimes undermined by challenges such as employment, inadequate access to resources (Mukwede et al., 2024)., lack of skills, exclusion from decision-making and poor mobilization strategies by leaders. In Ideato North Local Government Area (Imo State Government, 2020). of Imo State, several community development projects have been initiated over the years through communal efforts, governmental support, and non-government interventions. However, the extent of rural youth participation in these projects has not been adequately documented. Understanding the nature of their involvement is critical in designing policies and programmes that will strengthen their contributions to sustainable community development.

This study therefore seek to examine the rural youths participation in community development in Ideato North LGA.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Ascertain the perceived reasons for their participation in community development projects
2. Identify the perceived constraints in youths participation in the community development projects.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Ideato North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. It is one of the local government that made up of the 27 local government of Imo State. The people has a typical features of rural area with agriculture being their main economic activities (Imo State Government , 2020). Ideato North LGA lies between the latitude 5.88330 N and longitude 7.15000 E (Geographical survey of Nigeria,2015). The area has a land mass of 172.4km (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Data were collected using primary and secondary sources, the primary data were obtain using a set of structured questionnaire administered to 60 youths in the study area. A multi - stage sampling technique was adopted to select sample for the study, In the first stage, four autonomous communities out of 8 autonomous communities in the LGA were randomly selected. Second stage of sampling, 15 youths were randomly selected from the four (4) communities selected making a total number of 60 youths selected in the study Area.

Perceived reasons for participating in community development projects

Table 1: Distribution of the youths by perceived reasons for their participation in community development projects

Perceived reasons	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree(2)	Strongly disagree	Mean score	Standard dev.	Remarks
For employment generation	16 (26.7)	16(26.7)	19(31.7)	6(10)	3 (5)	3.60	1.13	Agree
Increased income generation	13 (21.7)	19(31.7)	14(23.3)	8(13.3)	6(10)	3.42	1.25	Agree
Reduce poverty in the community	3(5)	15(25)	22(36.7)	14(23.3)	6(10)	2.92	1.04	Disagree
To Improve the infrastructure in the Community	23(38.3)	21(35)	13(21.7)	3(5)	-	3.06	0.90	Agree
Improve the community's status in development	5(8.3)	15(25)	18(30)	14(23.3)	8(13.3)	2.91	1.16	Disagree
Increase economic activities in the community	16(26.7)	25(41.7)	16(26.7)	3(5)	-	3.90	0.86	Agree
To improved skills among youths in the community	5(8.3)	12(20)	19(31.7)	17(28.3)	7(11.7)	2.85	1.13	Disagree

Source: Field Survey data, 2024.

Table 1 shows the distribution of youths by perceived reasons for their participation in community development projects. the results shows that the youths agree to four(4)statement on their perceived reason for participation in the community development projects, while disagreeing with the rest three statements. Using a discriminating index of ≤ 3.0 for agreement and < 3.0 for disagreement. The statement the youths agreed to were; to increase economic activities in the community (3.90), for employment generation (3.60), for increased income generation(3.42).and to improve the infrastructure in the community(3.06), The standard deviation range between 0.86 to 1.25 which indicated the unity in responses to the reason for participating in community development projects. One of the reason agreed for participating in community projects was to increase economic activities in the community. It is a germane reason, as economic activities enhancement would reduce rural poverty in the community, therefore, community development is important because it induces economic growth which herald employment opportunities and attract infrastructure in the community.

2.1 Perceived constraints to youth's participation in community development projects

Table 2: Distribution of youths by perceived constraints to participation in community development projects

Areas project activities	Fully participated (FP)(3)	Partially participated (PP) (2)	Participation No participation (NP) (1)	Standard dev.	Mean score	Remarks
Project identification	15(2)	26(13.3)	19(31.7)	.76	2.01	Participation
Prioritizing of project	17(23.3)	28(46.7)	18(30)	.75	2.07	Non- Participation
Planning	14(23.3)	28(46.7)	18(30)	.73	2.07	Participation

Mobilizing funds	19(31.7)	20(33.3)	21(35)	.82	2.03	Participation
Monitoring work	13(21.7)	24(40)	23(38.3)	.79	2.17	Participation
Mobilizing of community members	14(23.3)	38(63.3)	8(13.3)	.60	1.9	Non-Participation
Labour supply	11(18.3)	29(48.3)	20(33.3)	.71	2.15	Participation
Follow-up	9(13.3)	20(33.3)	32(53.3)	.72	2.40	Participation

Source: Field survey data, 2024

Table 2: shows the result on perceived constraints on youths participation in community development projects. Using a discriminating index of ≤ 3.0 for agreement and < 3.0 for disagreement, the result indicates that four (4) out of seven (7) possible constraints were judge as agreement. The four in the order of showing of their mean score were, low social status (3.70), inadequate funding (3.45), corruption among the executives (Olori & Okide, 2014). (3.18), and project not based on people's needs (3.15). The other presented constraints were not perceived as constraints and their means score were as follows: Exclusion from project planning(2.88),Lack of technical competence(2.65), and poor educational background(2.32), Low social status was agreed as a constraint that affects youths participation in community development. Olori and Okide (2014), identified lack of transparency and accountability synonymous with corruption among the executives (Olori & Okide, 2014). as among the factors perceived as impediment to youths participation in community development project.

Conclusion

The study concluded that participation is an important element in community development projects in the rural communities. Community development is the concern of every member of the community, however, youths have shown their involvement in various community development project activities such as; in planning of the projects, identification of the project, monitoring of project works, mobilizing of funds required and in follow-up evaluation activities.

Recommendation

This study has made the following recommendations based on

1. Government should through the ministry of Agriculture,rural development and food security mount an enlightenment campaign to mobilize every members of the community irrespective of their social status.
2. Communities should elect responsible and trustworthy persons to manage their affairs.
3. Corruption should be discourage by bringing justice to bear on all persons found guilty of mismanaging office entrust to them.

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