

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF LAFIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE.

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**Abstract:** *Local government is seen as a sole provider of services in the rural areas in Nigeria being the closest to the people. It has been assigned a strong role to play in the country in terms of rural development. However, this has been hindered due to poor mobilization of community resources and non involvement of the rural people in the process of rural development. The study is aimed at looking at the responsiveness to rural population to rural development by local government and seeks to appraise the participation of the community in the development and improvement of the rural communities. Structured questionnaire was employed for collection of data from fifty (50) respondents that were selected from the population through convenience sampling procedure. Frequency tables and percentage was used to analyze the data collected from the respondents. The study concludes that to enhance rural development, the local government authority should mobilize massive participation of the community and resources that are directed towards improving social opportunities and basic capabilities of rural populace. It therefore recommends among others that projects for rural development should reflect the people felt needs, and the people should be involved in decision making process on matters that affect them directly.*

**Keywords:** Local Government, Community, Participatory, Rural Development

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## INTRODUCTION

Participatory rural development is an age long practice in our society. Different communities in Nigeria had employed self-help efforts as a mechanism to achieve a rural development mobilizes community resources to provide physical, social, economic and functional facilities in their localities. Okunala (2002), Basil and Nwankwo (2012) stated that, it is necessary to recognize that 70% of Nigerians population lives in the rural areas and have benefited little from the rapid economy growth in the past years. The improvement in the welfare of the average Nigeria will therefore required substantial increase in rural and council participatory in the community development of the rural areas.

Stephen (1987) Alanana (2007) Anyanwu (1999), outlines the following benefits for council and community participation in the rural development as:

- It improves on their quality of life through their joint participation in the rural development.
  - It brings government closer to rural people through their joint participation in decision and community development projects.
  - It ensures that rural people are integrated into national life, through their mass participation on community development programmes.
- Some of the areas that local government and community participation in the rural development includes:
- Decision making on matters that affects the community directly.
  - Health and sanitation programmes.
  - Maintenance of local government and community projects.
  - Water supply, community market, education and political participation

It is in this light, that participation of rural citizens in policies making and agenda setting for rural development in combination with adoption of millennium development goals strategy present themselves as necessary conditions for this liberation process. However, the present economic realities in the country has compelled a critical appraisal of this practice with a view to find a lasting solution and promoting rapid socio-economic development and achieving national development, which local government and the community participatory approach are the key ingredients for rural development.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Participatory rural development has suffered a setback in the past, due to non involvement of the essential ingredients of development (people) with the impression that government can provides all things needed to the people. Consequently the spirit of self-help efforts was relegated to the background. There is problem of finance facing both the local government council and the community to effectively mobilize their participation in their rural development. There is also a problem of inadequate support from the local government officials and bureaucracy which sometimes frustrate participatory efforts in rural development as a result of non cooperation, corruptions, embezzlement and mismanagement of the little resources for rural development.

## Research Questions

- a. To what extent did community and local government participate in the rural development?
- b. How does local government involves the rural people in activities of their rural development?
- c. What are the strategies to encourage community participation in rural development?

## Objective of the Study

The general objective for the study is aimed at examining the extent which local government and community are involved in the rural development of their community; which this effort can lead to achieving national development.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify how local government and community participation on the rural development of their community.
2. To identify the problem of local government and community participation in their rural development.
3. To identify strategies for encouraging local government and community participation in their rural development.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

According to Humes (1973) defined local government as political authority set up by the state as a subordinate authority for the purpose of dispensing

and promoting local initiative and response to local needs. Local government as the third tier of government that performs statutory functions in the state. The roles of local government is classified into two (2) phases. The first phase contains functions which local government have power to provide, which is referred to as a mandatory or exclusive power of local government, such as the formulation of economic plans and development schemes for the local government area. The second phase functions of local government involve those responsibilities that can aim in developing the state or nation as a whole. Community is a group of people, living in the same area with a system of government and culture. Afolayan (1995) look at it as community with low infrastructural development with low standard of living. Development defined as an overall process of transforming man and societies leading to social order on which every human being can achieve moral and material wellbeing (FAO 1988). It is the positive transformation in the entire structure of the society for the wellbeing of mankind.

Participatory is a process in which people are directly and actively involved in the planning and implementation of rural development programmes and projects (Anyanwu 1999, Pearser and Stietel 1979). It is organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in give social situation on the part of groups and movement of those hitherto excluded from such control.

Aslam (1981), defined rural development as a process of developing the rural poor, economy, and institutions from stage of stagnation or low productivity equilibrium into dynamic process leading to higher levels of living and better quality of life. Chambers (1982) sees it as a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of the poor rural people. It enable the rural poor to gain of themselves more of what they want and needs. The functionalist perspectives viewed society as made of various parts, that all functions together for the success of the entire society; that each of the parts performs its functions to ensure stabilization in the society. According to Giddens and Philip (2013), Macionis (2001) Holborn and Haralambos (2008) stated that, functionalist uses evolution, social or structural differentiation and re integration to explain social change in the society. Thus social change is seen as a gradual process in the human life cycle. To them, society grows into maturity through a gradual rise of

civilization just as a child grows into adulthood behavior pattern. Rural development depends on the commitment and efforts of the rural people themselves and local government authority. Each of this unit has a role to play to ensure rural development. As each unit constitutes a part or structure and each is expected to perform its role for the survival of the entire system or having rural development. For the rural area to develop, both the community and local government council must participate in sharing decision and community projects for the well beings and condition for the rural people.

## METHODOLOGY

The research designed for the study was survey method. Structured questionnaire was employed to gather information from the respondents in five (5) wards of Lafia local government area, namely Agyaragu tofa, Arikiya, Ashige, BAD and Wakwa.

### Population, Sample Size, Sampling Procedure

National population commission (2006) put the population of Lafia local government area at 25439 people. To determine the appropriate sample size for the study for the five wards, Yamane (1973) formula was employed to determine the sample size as shown mathematically bellows:

$$n = \frac{N}{3 + N(M)}$$

W here  $n$  = desired sample size

$N$  = survey population

$ME$  = margin of error allowed

Therefore:

$$n = \frac{25439}{3 + 25439(0.01)}$$

$$n = \frac{25439}{509}$$

$$n = 49.9$$

Approximately 50.

The sample size for the study is 50 based on the population of 25439 at the error margin of 1%. Therefore, in each of the five (5) wards, ten (10) respondents were randomly selected to form the sample frame and represent the entire population of the study by the use of convenience sampling method.

## METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from the respondents through focus group discussion was analysed through frequency tables and simple percentages based on 50 respondents in five different group discussions with the help of research assistant and tape recorder. Percentages are simple to understand and give cleared explanation of the respondent's opinions.

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1: Extent of community and local government participation in rural development.

Opinions	Responses	
	YES	NO
Decision making on matter affecting the community	32	18
Provision of health and sanitation facilities	38	12
Political participation at grass root	42	08
Maintenance of community projects	34	16
Water supply	35	15
Education	36	14
Market operation and controls	25	25
Other not specify	29	21
Total	271	129
X%	68%	32%

Source: Field survey, December, 2016.

Table 1 above shows that 68% of the respondents said yes, that above opinions meant that community and local government participates in the rural development of their areas, while 32% of the respondents said no. the findings revealed that both the community and the local government council participates in rural development of their areas as supported by the majority (68%) of the respondents.

**Table 2: How local government involves rural people on activities of rural development**

Opinions	Response	
	YES	NO
Decision making process	32	18
Maintenance of community projects	34	16
Political participation	44	06
Market operation and controls	34	16
Maintenance of peace and others	42	08
Others not specify	30	20
Total	216	84
X%	72%	28%

Source: Field survey, December, 2016.

Table 2 above shows that 72% of the respondents were in support that the local government involves rural people on activities of rural development, while 28% of the respondents were not in support. The findings revealed that local government council involves the rural people on rural development activities as supported by the majority (72%) of the respondents.

**Table 3: problems of local government and community participatory in rural development.**

Opinions	Responses	
	YES	NO
Lack of interest and not turn up for meeting	30	20
Project not reflected felt need of the people	30	20
Corruptions and mismanagement of resources	45	05
Problem of financing and resources	42	08
Lack of effective mobilization and implementation	44	06
Other not specify	32	18
Total	223	32
X%	73%	27%

Source: Field survey, December, 2016.

Table 3 above shows that 73% of the respondents are of the opinions that the above listed variables constitute problem for local government and community participatory in their rural development, while 27% of the respondents said no. The finding revealed that the above variable served as

problem that hinders local government and community participation in their rural development as supported by the majority (73%) of the respondents.

**Table 4: strategies to encourage local government and community participation in rural development.**

Opinions	Response	
	YES	NO
Enlightenment on the needs for rural development	40	10
Local community should be involve in decision making	40	10
People with integrity and qualification to manage local government	34	16
Agricultural sector should boost to improve other sectors	45	05
Projects should reflect the felt needs of the people	39	11
Other not specify	25	25
Total	225	74
X%	75%	25%

Source: Field survey, December, 2016.

Table 4 above shows that 75% of the respondents said yes that the above mention variables are strategies to encourage local government and community participation in their rural development, while 25% of the respondents said no. The finding revealed that the above listed variables can encourage local government and the community participation on their rural development as supported by the majority (75%) of the respondents.

## **FINDINGS**

The study revealed that both community and local government participation on rural development activities as supported by the respondents in their areas.

- Local government involves the community on their rural development activities in their areas as supported by 72% of the respondents
- Corruption, mismanagement, lack of interest, lack of funds and lack of mobilization are problem that hinders local government and community participation in their rural development as supported by 73% of the respondents in the field.
- Enlightenment of people, joint decision taking, boosting agricultural sector are meant to encourage rural development as supported by the 75% of the respondents in the field.



## CONCLUSION

Rural development practices in Nigeria over the years had been a one way practice, and still centrally package by the public officials and development agents, and handed down to the people, who become passive receipts and beneficiary of such development. To have rural development practice participatory by the local government and the community, there should be massive participations and investment that are directed towards at improving social opportunities and basic capabilities of rural populace that guarantee effective participation in any development process for both the community and local government council.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enlightenment and mobilization of rural people on the needs and the importance of rural participatory in their rural development programmes.
- The projects for rural development should reflect the people felt needs, and the people should be involve on decision making process on matter that affect them directly.
- People with reasonable qualification and integrity should be allowed to manage the affairs of local government council.
- Boosting agricultural production as to improve the economic and other sectors of life for the rural dwellers.

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