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## RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN YENAGOA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BAYELSA STATE

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**Abstract:** Yenagoa local Government Area of Bayelsa State, Nigeria has been the recipient of several community development programmes initiated by the Government. The perception of residents was assessed to ascertain if these programmes have improved their lives. Four hundred residents were randomly selected for the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. Data was analyzed using percentages and chi-square statistics. The study revealed that people are aware of government programmes/projects but are not involved in the process of initiating, planning and implementation of these programmes/projects, that these programmes/projects have not improved the living conditions of the people thus, peoples' perception of the programmes/projects are dissatisfactory. It is recommended that government should execute programme that are the felt need of the people

**Keywords:** Perception, Residents, Effectiveness, Community Development

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria gained her independence from the British government in 1960. Since then, the Federal Government has embarked on various programmes, projects and other community development (CD) activities in order to improve her economy. Community development is a process in the life of a community by which the people plan and act together for the satisfaction of their felt-need, to bring about improvements in the life of the people through changes in the conditions of the community (Anyanwu, 1992). According to Paul et al (1996), there are quite a number of federal agencies and programmes with mandate geared towards the improvement of the Nigerian economy and the alleviation of poverty in the country. These include; the People's Bank and Community Bank Programmes designed to make banking services more accessible and extend credit services to the poor, the Better Life Programmes (BLP) aimed at alleviating rural poverty particularly among women, the Nomadic Education Programme, National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), River Basin Development Authorities, The National Urban Mass Transit Programme, Programmes under the social development prolicy for disadvantaged groups such as the disabled, beggers, children, the aged and juvenile delinquents etc. Presently, some of these programmes have phased out while others are yet to accomplish their goals.

The government in 2000-2007 implemented an economic reform programme called the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS). The purpose of NEEDS is to raise the country's standard of living though a variety of reforms (The Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia, 2015). In 2001, the Federal Government emphasized the need to drive development programmes in the Niger Delta which Yenagoa LGA is a part of by establishing the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) under the NDDC Act of 2000 by the Federal Government (FG). This was to offer a lasting solution to the socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta region. NDDC intends to facilitate rapid and even sustainable development

of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful. (NDDC in Bayelsa State, 2005)

The birth of NDDC is traceable from the recommendation of the Willinks' Commission which had recommended that the region deserved a special development vehicle to be administered by the FG in 1958. Thus the following commissions were established namely, Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB) in 1960, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1993 and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2001 (NDDC in Bayelsa State, 2005). It is important to state that these commissions focused only on the development of the Niger Delta which comprises of 9 states: Ondo, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Cross Rivers, Abia and Imo State (The Capitol Magazine, 2007). A regional master plan was drawn up by the NDDC Governing Board in 2001 based on the emphasis of the then president Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo. This master plan was to feed directly into the new national development strategy; the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The contributions of NDDC to Community Development are numerous. It ranges from the construction of roads and bridges to the provision of water supply, electricity, health, economic empowerment, education and the development of a regional Development master plan (NDDC in Bayelsa State, 2005).

Since the government has embarked on various programmes and projects dating back from independence, it therefore becomes relevant to ask if these programmes have realized their goals and objectives of economic reformation and what level of improvement they have attained. Have these agencies effectively utilize these funds to see to the effective realization of their goals and objectives?

The study intends to identify existing government agencies and programmes especially their effectiveness in the L.G.A, their various contributions and effects in the lives of the people. Thus specific objectives are:

1. Identify the level of government contribution and the types of contribution;
2. Identify the sectors the government is interested in developing.

## **HYPOTHESES**

The following hypotheses were also tested:

- a. There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that these programmes and projects have improved the living conditions of the people.
- b. There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that government has influenced the people in their perception of these programmes and projects.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The area of this study is Yenagoa Local Government Area. It is located in Bayelsa state in the southern part of Nigeria which forms part of the Niger Delta region. It comprises 45 villages excluding the capital, Yenagoa and is predominantly populated by Izons; Epie, Atissa, Gbarain, Ekpetiama, Okordia, Zarama and Biseni clans' respectively. Yenagoa Local Government Area is one of the 8 LGAs that make up Bayelsa State. It occupies a total land area of 821.88 sq km with an estimated population of 123,243 people (Bayelsa Facts, 2008), with 70,645 males and 67,152 females. Agriculture, commerce and industry are the major economic sectors in the LGA. The research population of this study were 400 adults who are resident in Yenagoa LGA.

These adults were either unemployed or self-employed. Simple random sampling technique was used. The LGAs were grouped into four axes: Epie, Okordia/Zarama/Biseni, Gbarain Ekpetiama and Atissa respectively and 100 respondents were sampled from each of these groups. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data such as clan, location, educational background etc. Face validity and reliability tests (Test re-test) were conducted to confirm the appropriateness of the research instrument. 30 (thirty adults) participated in the pilot study. They were re-tested four weeks later and their scores correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The extent to which government has realized sustainable development was measured using a five point likert-like scale. This was stated as follows: U- Undecided, SD- Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, A-Agree and SA-Strongly Agree. Percentage distribution and chi-square were used to analyze the research questions and hypotheses respectively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Question 1

Table 1 indicates that 162 respondents (40.5%) agreed that such community development programmes were public enlightenment campaigns, health seminars; workshops, etc while 214 (53.5%) disagreed. 230 respondents (57.5%) agreed that government projects and programmes satisfied their earnest need and thus, government had met their felt-need while 134 respondents (33.5%) disagreed. 110 (27.5%) respondents agreed that members of their communities contributed financially to the projects while 252 (63%) disagreed. Also, 164 (41%) respondents agreed that the various government programmes and projects have improved their living conditions while 210 (52.5%) disagreed.

### Research Question 2

Table 2 shows that 88 (22%) respondents agree that government has contributed to major sectors of their community's economy like agriculture, education, etc while 264 (66%) disagreed. Although, 172 (43%) respondents agreed that government has embarked on programmes/projects in the health, educational and agricultural sectors of their communities; 196 (49%) disagreed. Also, 160 (40%) of the respondents agreed that initiatives by the government have improved their standard of living while 212 (53%) disagreed. Furthermore, 130 (32.5%) of the respondents agreed that government initiatives through these programmes and projects were satisfying while 254 (63.5%) disagreed.

## TEST OF HYPOTHESES

There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that these programmes and projects have improved the living conditions of the people.

The computed chi-square ( $X^2$ ) is 124.3 while the table value at 0.05 significant level is 7.82. Since the calculated  $X^2$  is greater than the table value, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_A$ ). This means that government programmes and projects have not improved the living conditions of the people.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that Government has made major contributions in the economic sectors of the LGA and thus, influenced the people in their perception of these programmes and projects. The computed Chi-square ( $X^2$ ) is 44.1 while the critical table value is 7.82. We therefore reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and accept the  $H_A$  (alternative hypothesis). This implies that government has not made major contributions in the economic sectors of the LGA and has also not influenced the people in their perception of these programmes/projects.

### **Research Question 1**

Have these programmes/projects improved the living conditions of the people?

The findings reveal that government programmes/projects have not improved the living conditions of the people. Although 57.5% agreed that government projects/programmes addressed their felt-need as to 33.5% who disagreed, 52.5% indicated that these programmes/projects have not improved their living conditions while 41% agreed. 63% also disagreed that members of their communities contribute financially to these programmes/projects while 27.5% agreed. Furthermore, 53.5% disagreed that government had not embarked on various community development programmes like public enlightenment campaigns, health seminars, workshops, etc while 40.5% agreed. Although 57.5% of respondent agreed that their felt need is met, 52.5% indicated that their living conditions have not been improved. This supports the notion that people still expect government to meet every of their needs accepting that their standard of living is improved. Thus the vision of NEEDS which is based on the Kuru Declaration (2005), seeks to create a new Nigerian citizen who values hard work and who realizes that one cannot have something for nothing. (NEEDS Nigeria, 2004)

Another report, urged the people of Bayelsa State to think what they would for the state rather than what the state would do for them. Furthermore, the lack of financial contribution by members of the community to projects is one important aspect of community development as financial contribution brings bond and commitment among the people to their project (Pragmatism 2008). According to Anyanwu 1992, real development is not a process applied to a group by some other body or organization but rather, a process of discovery by the group itself. Thus, where the desire to develop is not aroused and the effort to improve is not made, there can be no development. However, success in community development presupposes objectives which the people can understand and accept as goals for which they may be prepared to make sustained efforts.

### **Research Question 2**

What economic sector is the government interested in developing?

The finding revealed that government has not contributed to major sectors of the economy in the LG and has thus, not influenced the people in the perception of these projects/programmes. 66% disagreed that government has contributed to major sectors of their economy while 22% agreed. 43% agreed that government has embarked on programme/projects in the health, educational and agricultural sectors while 49% disagreed. Also 40% of the respondents agreed that these initiatives by government in these various sectors have resulted in improved standard of living while 53% disagreed. While 32.5% of the respondents agreed that government's initiatives through these programmes/projects in the development of their economy was satisfactory, 63.5% disagreed.

This findings contradict the fact that government, through grass root development intend to actualize her plan of National Growth and Development haven establish the structure of Local Government (Anyanwu 1992). Considering the various community development programmes/projects of the Federal Government from independence till date, it becomes a surprise that these programmes/projects have still not achieved their goals of improving the standard of living of the people. Furthermore, the FG has spent billions of naira to see to the improved welfare and living conditions of the people. (Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia, 2015).

Out of a state budget of N18.6bn, N1.85bn has been earmarked for execution of 3 priority community development projects in each community in Bayelsa State. (Pragmatism 2008.) This means that government intention is genuine but if the wrong strategy is adopted, the desired impact would not be felt.

### Test of Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that these programmes and projects have improved the living conditions of the people.

Table 3 shows that the computed  $X^2$  is 124.3 while the table value at 0.05 significant level is 7.82. The calculated value exceeds the table value, thus, we accept the alternative hypothesis. This means that government programmes and projects have not improved the living conditions of the people. This finding reveals why the federal government (FG) in 2001 emphasized the need to drive development programmes in this area through a regional master plan. It further reveals why till date, government still seeks to improve the living conditions of the people in this area as former President Olusegun Obasanjo rightly puts; 'Despite the efforts made so far, there is still enormous challenges in the Niger Delta. The average Niger Delta youth is yet to have the right value orientation of self-worth and skills to earn money.' ( NDDC Mission to Heal 2, 2007).

2. There is no significant difference between those who agree and those who disagree that government has made major contribution to the economic sector of the local government and thus influenced the people in their perception of these programmes and projects.

Table 3 also shows that the computed  $X^2$  is 44.1 while the critical value is 7.82 thus the alternative hypothesis is accepted while the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that government has not made major contributions in the economic sectors of the LGA and has not influenced the people in their perception of these programmes and projects. Anyanwu 1992 opines that change agents in community development can influence the people's perception if they first understand and appreciate the goals of the people making them his own to some degree. Only then can they accept any suggestion from him as an expert. Without taking this step, members of a community are likely going to reject professional advice however beneficial they may appear to be. From the results, some persons agreed (22%) that major contributions have been made but the difference who disagreed (66%) was significant. This means that there is a beat of input by the government in these sectors but it is not significant thus, not good enough.

### CONCLUSION

The study revealed that people are aware of government's programmes and projects yet they are not involved in the process of initiating, planning and implementation of the programmes and projects. The programmes and project are not making the right impact in the various communities thus they are not truly appreciated by the people even though they recognize these programmes and projects. It is recommended that Government should as much as possible avoid the execution of projects that are not the felt-need of the people.

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**TABLE 1: CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE GOVERNMENT IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES/PROJECTS**

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1	Government has embarked on various programmes like public enlightenment campaigns, health seminars, workshops etc including various rural development projects	162	40.5	214	53.5
2	These projects/programmes are the felt-need of the people	230	57.5	134	33.5
3	Members of the community contribute financially in these projects/programmes	110	27.5	252	63
4	These projects/programmes has improved the living conditions of the people	164	41	210	52.5

**TABLE 2: GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION IN MAJOR ECONOMIC SECTORS OF THE LG'S ECONOMY**

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Agreed	%	Disagreed	%
1	Government has contributed to major sectors of our community's economy.	88	22	264	66
2	Government has embarked on programmes/projects in the health, educational and agricultural sectors.	172	43	196	49
3	These initiatives by the government in these various sectors have resulted in improved standard of living.	160	40	212	53
4	Government's initiatives through these programmes/projects in the development of our community are satisfactory.	130	32.5	254	63.5

**TABLE 3: CHI- SQUARE ANALYSIS OF RESPONDENTS**

	X <sup>2</sup> cal	DF	X <sup>2</sup> tab	DECISION
Hypothesis 1	124.3	3	7.82	significant
Hypothesis 2	44.1	3	7.82	significant

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