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## **COUNTERPART FUNDING AND SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

***Stephen, Makoji Robert***  
***Department of Public Administration***  
***Federal Polytechnic Idah, Kogi State***  
***E-mail: orokpogbole@yahoo.com***

### **ABSTRACT**

The magnitude and the complexity of the challenge of reducing poverty in the world have shaped the need to identify new ways to attack the problem. An important element of current thinking about how to reduce poverty is the involvement of primary stakeholders in the activities of development interventions. One major means of ensuring the participation of primary stakeholders is through the demand for the payment of counterpart funding towards the cost of implementing poverty reduction project. The counterpart funding policy has been identified as a means of ensuring participatory and sustainable development. Findings indicate that there has been a significant level of community participation in development intervention. The paper reveals among others that the counterpart funding policy has increased the sense of ownership of beneficiaries in the projects they have been directly involved in and could be a precursor for sustainable rural development.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent times, the issues of poverty alleviation and poverty reduction have become one of the crucial issues on the agenda of African Nations, particularly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Index (HDI) which placed most African States at the bottom of the development pyramid (UNDP 2002). As at 1999, Nigeria was ranked as one of 175th poorest nations, and as reported by Ochai (2002) in the Graphics Newspaper, it was observed from the UNDP report that seventy two million Nigerians live below the poverty line with most of its poor which account for a whopping 75% concentrated in the rural areas where illiteracy prevalence is high, portable water and health facilities are rarely available, road and electricity infrastructure are either unavailable or ill-managed. The UNDP report on Africa (2002) further indicated that out of 173 countries studied, Nigeria is the 20th least developed country on the globe. The study also revealed that over 60% of Nigerians earn less than one dollar per day. Various surveys in the socioeconomic spheres showed that a large number of Nigerians are not only suffering from malnutrition but also inflicted by preventable diseases. Regrettably however, Nigeria is classified among countries, which suffer in the midst of abundant human and material resources.

The 1997 poverty Assessment study conducted by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN 1998 ) which compared Nigeria with five selected developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Ghana, South, Africa, Indonesia, Brazil, and Mexico) on a number of indicators revealed that Nigeria was the poorest among these nations. The basic indicators used include Gross National Product (GNP) per capita, percentage of population living below the

international poverty line, as well as health indicators such as life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rates, prevalence of malnutrition, access to portable water and sanitation, basic education indicators such as enrolment ratios at various levels, adult literacy, and availability of basic infrastructure such as electricity consumption, telephone services, roads, etc. The results of this study, notes Nkom, (2001) was depressing, as Nigeria came out as the poorest of the selected developing countries. Despite recognition of the need for special strategies to address the widespread menace of rural poverty in developing countries, initiative aimed at bringing about transforming the rural standard of living have not had a consistent impact in reducing poverty. The failure of the most recent of these interventions –Integrated Rural Development – has left a policy vacuum as donors and countries struggle to find new ways to reduce rural poverty. The recent initiatives designed by the World Bank and other development partners is aimed at encouraging community participation in development initiatives that would increase access of the poor to basic social and economic infrastructure and services, and empower communities through participation in the selection, implementation, operation and maintenance of development projects. One of the ways of promoting community participation in poverty reduction initiatives is the counterpart funding policy, which has began to receive increasing attention in recent times.

The counterpart funding policy which operates through the concept of cost sharing is principally aimed at promoting ownership and sustainability of development projects. It is premised on the sustainable livelihood approach to poverty reduction attributed to Chamber and Conway (1992) which holds that the poor do not just have needs, but they have assets and as a result, the objectives of poverty reduction should be to create an enabling environment where the poor will be able to pursue their own livelihood strategies and be vibrant agents of caring for their own lives. A lot of studies have been undertaken to bring to the fore the necessity of community participation in development intervention. In the words of Narayan et al (2000), the poor, among others, want community driven development programmes so that they could shape their own destinies, end corruption and ensure accountability.

It has become glaring in recent times that it is from the local initiatives, ideas and communities of grass roots organizations and the new social movements – not states, elites and foreign agencies - that the new conceptions and practices of 'development' are emerging (Esterver,1987; Escobar, 1992:420-35). In a study carried out on counterpart funding policy in Bolivia, Honduras, Peru, Zimbabwe, Cambodia, Malawi and Zambia, Paraguay and Sierra Leone, Narayan (2000) pointed out that rural communities exhibited so much enthusiasm and were ready to contribute to the funding of projects as long as they could see the need for the project and were willing to contribute to the financing of the project as long as they were informed about the terms and application of their financial contribution. Several studies carried out have shown that community participation is a critical component in irrigation, livestock, health, water, sanitation and agriculture (Pretty et al, 1995). The use of the counterpart funding policy in poverty reduction projects is therefore aimed at ensuring

ownership and sustainability of development intervention to impress on the minds of the primary shareholders the culture of cost sharing as a form of community participation. In Nigeria, the first move towards addressing the deplorable poverty situation in the country through community participation was made in 1999 when the Federal Government in collaboration with the World Bank and the African Development Bank established the Community-based Poverty Reduction Project (CPRP) to address this malaise known as poverty.

The Community-based Poverty Reduction Project (CPRP) an initiative of the World Bank which represents a new focus and strategy based on demand driven, bottom-up approach demands that communities determine their own needs and prioritize them rather than those imposed from "outside" as has been the case in the past. The experience of the last several decades has indicated that development is possible and can be achieved. In the past fifty years, a few countries have succeeded with rapid economic growth and have been able to lift their citizens out of poverty (Stiglitz, 1998). However, in some countries like Nigeria, the gap has actually widened and poverty increased. As noted by many scholars (Fenriho 1980, De Beer and Swanepoel, 2000) previous development approaches were mechanistic and their strategies were focused on piecemeal development. These strategies and approaches failed to address development in its broader sense. The deep dissatisfaction with previous development paradigms has given rise to an alternative and more inclusive "people centered" development approach. Swanepoel (2000) and Winder (2001) notes that social fund agencies in partnership with indigenous communities work together so as to bring about sustainable development at the community level.

Over the years experience clearly indicates that the issue of community participation and sustainability of projects in disadvantaged and marginalized communities is still questionable. In this regard, there is limited detailed research and the absence of research publications and documentation to provide sufficient evidence for the above argument. Hence, this paper intends to appraise the place of community participation, sustainability of projects and sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

### **Framework of Analysis**

The experience of the last several decades has indicated that development is possible and can be achieved. In the past fifty years, a few countries have succeeded with rapid economic growth and have been able to lift their citizens out of poverty (Stiglitz, 1998). However, in some countries like Nigeria, the gap has actually widened and poverty increased. As noted by many scholars (Ferriho 1980, De Beer & Swanepoel, 2000), previous development approaches were mechanistic and their strategies were focused on piecemeal development. These strategies and approaches failed to address development in its broader sense. The deep dissatisfaction with previous development paradigms has given rise to an alternative and more inclusive 'people centered' development approach. The participatory theory of development was chosen as an appropriate theoretical base given the fact that recent

discussions in development have moved from holistic theorization towards more localized, empirical and inductive approaches. The central concern of participatory development theory is that changes and enhanced resources should largely be influenced and determined by locally perceived needs (Burkey 1993). Instead of letting outside experts and other external parties determine what needs to be changed in the communities, the local people should be encouraged to examine and identify their own problems.

De Beer & Swanepoel (2001) refer to participatory development as the co-operation, mobilization of communities or involving communities in the execution of development plans. This philosophy is built on a belief that citizens can be trusted to shape their own future. Participatory development uses local decision-making and capacities to steer and define the nature of an intervention. Participatory development encourages grassroots organizations to become partners in the development endeavor. Moreover, this approach emphasizes the importance of the inclusion of people, partnerships, the sharing of power and responsibility and empowerment (Dennis cited in Fitamo, 2003). This paradigm calls for an integrative approach whereby all development actors such as government and civil society, including non-governmental and community-based organizations, play a role in development. Furthermore, it seeks to involve ordinary people at grassroots' level in view of the local community being given the opportunity to participate in projects, have the capacity to plan, implement and manage their own development. This approach enables the community to build their own capacity, self-reliance and ensure sustainable development (Fitamo, 2003; De Beer & Swanepoel, 2001; Penderis, 1996; Burkey, 1993).

Participation theory points out that participation empowers the primary stakeholders of development interventions through the following mechanisms:

- Helping break the mentality of dependence, promoting self-awareness and confidence, by leading the poor to examine their problems and to think positively about solutions (Oakley, 1991);
- Helping poor people to acquire new skills and abilities which could enable them to better defend and promote their livelihoods (Oakley et al., 1998; DFID, 2001; Sen, 1997);
- Building up the capacity of people to generate and influence development at various levels, increasing their access to and influence over resources and institutions (Karl, 2000; Sen, 1997);
- Building social capital, promoting networks and facilitating better management of risks by households (social safety nets), through reciprocal self-help, sharing information and strengthening local associations (Karl, 2000; Grootaert, 2001);
- Strengthening the Poor's voice (The World Bank, 2001).

### **Sustainable Rural Development: An Explanation**

Sustainable development was proposed as a model to guide global economic development by the World Commission on Environment and Development, otherwise known as the

Brundtland Commission (WCED) in 1987 and the subsequent emergence of Agenda 21 and Rio Declaration. There is no single and exhaustive definition of "sustainable development". Depending on the context and the overriding objective sought, Sustainable Development has been said at various times to mean development that can be sustained over the present generation for the future generations. Sustainable Development (SD) is a pattern of economic growth in which resource use aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present (WCED, 1987).

The term 'sustainable development' was used by the Brundtland Commission which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs". The United Nations 2005 World Summit outcome document refers to sustainable development as economic development, social development, and environmental protection. Broadly defined, the sustainable development mantra enjoins current generations to take a system approach to growth and development and manage natural and social capital for the welfare of their own and future generations (United Nations, 2007). Like sustainable development, sustainable rural development tends to be seen as socially and politically constructed and, at the same time, as an ongoing and evolving process that requires constant reappraisal. For this reason, rather than seeking a single definitive formulation, it may be more fruitful, as van der Ploeg and Renting (2004:234) suggest, to attempt to capture the dynamics of sustainable rural development in a critical manner. In short, although sustainable rural development may assume a variety of forms, there are three key expressions of this emerging paradigm:

It is a response to the price/cost-squeeze on agriculture. It adds income and employment opportunities to the agricultural sector by enlarging value added; It expresses new relationships between the agricultural sector and society at large. It contributes to the construction of a new agricultural sector that corresponds to the needs and expectations of society at large; It implies a redefinition, recombination and/or reconfiguration of rural resources (Marsden 2003:186).

### **Counterpart Funding and the Challenges of Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria**

The demand for the payment of counterpart funding towards the cost of implementing poverty reduction projects has been identified as a means of ensuring participatory and sustainable development. According to several authors (Paul 1988, Oakley, 1991 and Coetzee, 2001), community participation in development project is broadly understood as an active process by which beneficiary / client groups influence the direction and execution of development with a view to enhancing their well being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance and other values they cherish. The essence of participation is a self-transformation process whereby people are empowered through the process of learning so they will be enabled to take responsibility for their own development with little or no outside

intervention. In the Kogi State Community and Social Development Agency (KGCSDA) community based rural development projects, community participation could be viewed as the full involvement of the target population and other stakeholders in all stages of the project.

From the foregoing, it is hereby submitted that the counterpart funding policy has improved significantly the response of rural communities to development initiatives. A similar study carried out by Obeng Nti (2005) in some selected communities in Ghana indicate that communities, whether rich or poor, were endowed with human and material resources which they could tap to meet their share of projects cost. He contended that when poor communities use their own resources to supplement the assistance from development partners, their egos are boosted and this promotes ownership and management of the projects. Idakwoji (2002) seem to be in agreement with Obeng Nti (ibid) when he opined that when communities are enabled to meet their obligations within the counterpart funding policy, sustainability through community participation in the maintenance of facilities can be guaranteed. This finding is in line with the sustainable livelihood approach or poverty reduction (Chamber and Conway, 1992, Moser 1998) this brings to the fore the importance of new thinking in development theory and practice that poor communities were not mere recipients of handouts but active participants of their own development.

### **Project Sustainability**

A self-sustaining participatory development process is based on the mobilization of local resources, and infers continuity after project completion. In this sense, participation is fundamental to developing a self-sustaining momentum of development, which will insure continuity of activities when outside support terminates (Penderis, 1996). It emphasizes the increased role and responsibilities of the community on one hand, and the decreasing role and responsibility of facilitators or development actors on the other hand. This should be done to ensure mutual trust and improve capabilities of community members to prepare the community for new challenges. This entails people talking together, developing a collective intelligence, a form of "communal wisdom", which integrate past, present and future experiences (Barton 2000:150). One of the means of ensuring sustainability is to strengthen the collaborative efforts of the beneficiaries and the facilitators, work hand in hand and empower them before transferring the project to the target beneficiaries.

One of the beneficiaries in Dekina Local Government Area in Kogi East Senatorial District where a borehole was sank at a total project sum of ₦5,507,775.00 of which the community contributed 10% of the cost indicated that a management committee was set up by the community. The committee was saddled with the responsibility of maintaining the borehole through the introduction of user fees of ₦5 per basin of water. This money according to him was used to purchase diesel and to carry out routine maintenance on the generating plant. From the foregoing, there is a consensus of opinion that the payment of counterpart funding promotes ownership and sustainability of poverty reduction projects. Eade (1997) is in

agreement but adds that the payment of counterpart funding alone cannot promote continued sustainability of poverty reduction projects. According to him, to ensure sustainability there should be good governance, as well as networking and coordination among all development actors and the community.

### **Capacity Building**

Capacity building refers to the strengthening of skills and knowledge of beneficiaries. This can be achieved through participation in the planning and implementing and managing tasks of the project and actively monitoring various sections of the project (Rahman in Penderis, 1996). Capacity building is a long-term process. Problems occur when development actors speed up the process by focusing on projects rather than long-term strategies. When development actors neglect popular participation and do most of the work themselves, either for their own satisfaction or to speed up the process, the capacity of the community will not be built. In such cases, there is little chance that projects will be sustainable in the future. In this regard, Eade (1997) mentioned that the prime responsibility for assessment, decision making, planning and evaluating should rest with local people. In a similar vein, Swan and Gawith, as discussed in Penderis (1996) noted that capacity building increases the sense of control and independence over issues and decisions which affect beneficiaries' lives and promotes self-awareness, self-identification and an understanding of their own situation. If development actors fail to allow the participation of beneficiaries in the process of development, it is not only disempowering, but also creates dependency and reliance. KGCSDA in other to carry the community along in the process of planning, monitoring, Evaluation and the management of projects to ensure sustainability put in place a number of training programmes targeted at Rural Community, community Based Organizations (CBO's), and Community Development Officer at the local Government level

Training provided for benefiting communities can equip them to put in place measures that will ensure project sustainability. Attesting to this, feedback from evaluation by the National Planning Commission indicates that the projects so far executed are intact. Act of vandalism or theft reduced, this can no doubt be attributed to the development of local executive capacity; entrenchment of accountability, transparency and self-reliance within communities.

### **Project Benefits**

Suffice to it to assert also that counterpart funded project, brings about socio-economic transformation in the areas of water, improvement in educational infrastructure, health and environmental rehabilitation. According to him, the overall result is a remarkable improvement in the standard of living of the poor. Corroborating the above view, the World Bank Report (World Bank, 2006) said that the Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER) had conducted a review exercise and found out that the incidence of water borne diseases has declined in the benefiting States as a result of the water projects namely boreholes and hand dug wells. NISER also notes that the distances children travel to school and back, were reduced after the completion of school blocks in some communities.

Other improvements recorded in the communities include better access to Health Care Centers by communities since completion of Local Health Centers under the projects, improvement in rural roads resulting in easier travels to farms and availability of farm produce in markets. In all, the World Bank Report noted that poverty levels have been perceived to have decreased in some households because of the construction of commercial markets where “female heads of households are now managing businesses”. The World Bank also noted that the success of the projects were largely as a result of community participation in project selection, design, implementation and monitoring, adding that effectiveness and responsiveness exhibited by the management unit at the State level was also a major contribution to the success. The survey result of the in-depth interviews with some beneficiaries indicated that the project have had an impact on their lives as can be seen from the case studies of the following two beneficiaries.

**Case study 1:**

Testimony of a community leader from Okpachala – Ogbagbada in Igalamela/Odolu Local Government. Where electricity project was completed at total project cost of ₦3,806,365.50 with the community contributing 10% of the counterpart funds.

My name is Osuma Edicha. I have been living in this community since I was born. Prior to the completion of these class rooms and provision of desks, our children had to sit on locally made stools in classrooms built with mud and leaking roofs. Some had to sit under the tree to learn where they are often under the mercy of rain and sunshine. My son Igbatigbi Edicha was in a class that meets under the tree and would run home anytime rain threatens to fall abandoning studies for that day. With the completion of this project, things have changed. The community is happy and we know the children and their teachers are happy too.

**Case study 2:**

A beneficiary from a school project completed at Odu-Igegeli in Dekina Local Government Area at a total sum of ₦3,398,728.00. The community contributed 10% of the counterpart funds.

My name is Inah Oyibo. I am a community leader and I live in this community. This community though very close to Idah town has been long neglected in terms of electricity. With the completion of this project, economic activities have improved. I have been able to get a grinding machine which uses electricity for my wife to supplement the petrol driven one. Whenever there is electricity, the cost of running the second engine with petrol is saved. Moreover, the children are happier for it.



The successful implementation of any project is attributable to the prompt release of counterpart funds by the World Bank, the Federal Government, the State Government and the benefiting communities. More so, the participatory approach to project implementation as opposed to the top-down approach to rural development has played an important role as could be seen from our discussion so far.

## **CONCLUSION**

Looking back in history, development in the past was principally focused on amassing capital and expansion of industries and resolving problems through expert based techniques and top-down policy. This approach had been found to be counter-productive as it views the target community as mere recipients of development. The disenchantment with the traditional development paradigm led to an examination of the very purpose of development and a guided shift from the traditional approach to a more people friendly approach; the bottom-up approach which seeks to involve communities in decision-making and execution of development and projects with the main intent of empowering men and women to bring about meaningful changes in their lives and that of their communities. With respect to community participation, empirical research findings indicate that beneficiaries actively participated in project planning and implementation. For instance, members of the communities apart from the payment of counterpart funds participated in the provision of free labor, the provision of stones, poles, sand, etc. Roodt (2001) notes that without participation, a sense of ownership of projects by the community will not be ensured and the sustainability of such projects therefore cannot be achieved.

Generally, the counterpart funding policy which is an instrument for community participation in development interventions has received positive response from communities and can be said to be an effective means of promoting community development. The policy has enabled communities to implement a number of poverty reduction projects and as a result have improved their access to basic social and economic infrastructure. Therefore, when the policy is well packaged it would go a long way to complement the efforts of Government and the various local governments in the fight against poverty and ensuring sustainable development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are made to improve the implementation of the counterpart funding policy in poverty reduction and sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

1. There is the need for more community sensitization prior to the implementation of projects and more importantly during the implementation period. The essence is to keep communities constantly reminded of their roles in project implementation and also fashion out strategies to carry out the expected roles. This is necessary because a community may be endowed adequately with all the needed resources like sand, stone, water, labor among others but the internal dynamics of the community may be such that constant direction and prompting by

project officers will be required to mobilize them for action. This would also help to reduce the incidence of misinformation which affects community participation.

2. To address the issue of low community participation in project implementation, a much closer collaboration is necessary between the development partners and the communities for scheduling projects implementation periods in order to avoid the situation whereby project implementation periods coincide with major farming/fishing seasons - the source of livelihood of rural communities.

3. To encourage effective community participation and more importantly, enable communities to fully pay their counterpart funds, there is the need to look at the timeframe communities are required to provide their counterpart funds. Average project duration of 18 months is recommended. This would give the communities ample time to pay their counterpart funds and at the same time go about their economic activities. However, if there is the need to complete a project within a shorter timeframe, there would be the need for a downward review of the counterpart funds or the communities should be helped to procure materials which may not be readily available in their communities.

4. To ensure sustainability of projects, communities must come out with implementable operation and maintenance plans during the project design stage. Such operation and maintenance plans would indicate fees fixing rate (where applicable), responsibility for management and maintenance, time to undertake repairs, source of fund for maintenance, fund raising arrangements among others. After completion of projects, the capacities of project management committees need to be constantly strengthened in project operation and maintenance to enable them (committees) operationalize the plans. This would inculcate the culture of maintenance in communities.

5. Development agencies should share information about the objectives and resources of their intervention amongst all stakeholders and use participatory method for strengthening accountability and transparency. Information is the basic tool for accountability and to empower people and allow them to become responsible for their own action.

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