

# PLANNING PEOPLES' PARTICIPAION IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AT THE GRASSROOT LEVELS IN NIGERIA.

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## ABSTRACT

There is a consensus of opinion among development practitioners that the grassroots people should be involved in programmes designed for the improvement of their lives and living standards. Despite this consensus, planning peoples participation is one of the most frequently overlooked elements of community development. This paper among other things established the significance of planning peoples' participation and how peoples' participation should be done. In planning peoples' participation, this paper recommends that experienced community development experts should always be involved as their field experience would count in difficult situations.

**KEY WORDS:** Planning, People, Participation, Community Development.

## INTRODUCTION

All over the world, community development has been accepted as a major strategy for rapid development, especially at the grassroots levels. As observed by Adekola {2007} community development processes and programmes have become important to socio-economic growth and development. This is because of the qualitative shift in policies of nations, especially the third world countries, towards indigenus entrepreneurship and innovations. This is with the aim of providing a more conducive participatory environment for mobilising national resources as well as maximise output in the country.

Community development as a development strategy is predicated on the capacity of the people and government support. The strength of community development is the people. This may be the reason for the first attempt at defining the concept of community development (Cambridge Summer Conference definition of 1948) emphasising the initiative of the people. Adekola (2007:120) perceived development as the capacity of the people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the application of their talents and labour power. The community people therefore,

constitute one of the major agents in the development process.

The justification for the involvement of the people in the development activities is also based on the fact that, it is they who know the objective truth and realities of their problems and underprivileged condition and it is they who possess the right solution to the problem. However, as important as peoples participation in community development is and the consensus among development practitioners that people must participate in the development programmes meant for the improvement of their life and living standard; Williams (1980) observed that participation is not always planned. The general assertion that if you fail to plan, you plan to fail confirms the problems many change agents often confront in getting the people involved in community development programmes. Such problems usually start from the fact that peoples participation is not often incorporated into programme design and plan.

Planning itself is not an automatic answer to any question or solution to all problems. It is simply looking ahead and anticipating the future; making choices from available alternative means to achieve specific objectives and designing actions to attain the objectives. Planning participation for community

development therefore requires a blue-print or format of why, how and when people would participate in the development programme. As observed by Adekola (2008) when people participate in community development, efforts should be made to ensure that some influential individuals or groups are not allowed to hijack the programme. To this end, planning peoples' participation should answer the questions: who would participate at each stage of the development, why, how and when? This paper therefore examines the issue of planning peoples' participation in sustainable community development programme with the aim of developing a framework for planning peoples participation in community development.

### Conceptual Clarification

For the purpose of clarity and better understanding of the subject of this discourse, attempt is made to present scholars' views on the major concept of this paper with special focus on planning and participation.

### Planning

Planning is an aspect of human activities and social actions. Community based programmes and projects which entail expenditure in terms of money, time human and material resources are part of such social actions in which considerable planning is required. According to Obadan (2001) planning involves looking ahead and anticipating the future, making choices to achieve the objectives and formulating programmes of action to attain the objectives. Dror (1963) views planning as the process of preparing a set of decision for acting in the future. Planning as conceived by Egunyomi (1999) is a purposively stated steps which is a continuous process aimed at ensuring that the various units of an organisation operate harmoniously to attain the organisational goals and objectives.

Planning can also be seen as an exercise of fore-thought in an attempt to select the best means to securing specified aims. In a simpler language, planning is deciding now or in advance what is to be done in the future. In other words, it is a process of making decision in the present in order to bring about a series of desired changes in the future. It is a process in which attempt is made to chart a goal for the society and then re-organise or re-order the use of available resource to achieve the desired goals. Being futuristic, planning requires imagination and choice.

Planning as a major aspect of achieving stated goals possesses some elements. These elements could also form steps involved in planning. As presented by Egunyomi (1999) the elements entail:

- i. The definition and clarification of the purpose and scope of operation;
- ii. Investigation to reveal the conditions affecting the achievement of the purposes;
- iii. Analysis to determine the meaning of the facts as to forecast effects of possible courses of actions on achievement of purposes and
- iv. Decision making to set the course of the operation as indicated by the process of purpose, definition, investigation and analysis.

Programme developers, managers and change agents engage in the process of planning for various reasons. A broad summary of such reasons include the fact that, it provides a sense of direction to the programme. This is important because lack or inadequate knowledge of the destination would always make acknowledgement of the arrival at the destination difficult. The alternative to planning is random, uncoordinated and wasteful activity. Individuals, organisations and communities undertaking activities without a plan are likely to be ineffective.

Based on the above, we engage in planning because of its capability to raise the rationality of decision making and decision reached. Other reasons for planning include the fact it is a means of securing co-ordination among policy instruments, permits adequate analysis of complex objectives and allows for adequate interpretation and understanding of immediate and future implications of decisions and actions.

Planning could be classified as formal or informal. Formal, when it is documented and involves conscious programmed efforts in an organisational unit. Informal when it is a continual exercise by individuals, group or organisation. It is usually not documented but may accommodate written instruments like letters, notes or diary. Planning could also be classified spatially as regional planning, national planning or international planning. Time wise, planning could be short term, medium term or long term.

Planning in and for community development programme/project would accommodate any or all of the types; depending

on the size of the programme/project, the organiser, the beneficiaries and the duration of the project. However, planning for peoples' participation in community development is programme/project specific and to a large extent guided by what is to be achieved through such participation and the major actors in the programme. Discussing the issue of planning public participation in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), Mckeown (2002) presented the contents of table I below as broad based issues to be addressed in planning peoples' participation

**Planning Public Participation**

Stage of project	Step 1 Reason for Public participation	Step 2 Identify goals of the process	Step 3: Answer Questions about the process			Q4: What is Government agency's role?	Step 4 Public Participation processes	Step 5 Evaluate the process
			Q1: Who are participants?	Q2: What type of interaction is appropriate?	Q3: Amount of public influence?			
Need Assessment. To gather the best information and ideas from many sources	The public share local knowledge and creative thinking with government agency	Increase information and creativity related to specific projects	Everyone. Takes step to ensure wide representations on to socio-economic groups	Information sharing. Emphasise two way exchange. Citizens hear what agencies are doing; agencies hear what citizens' thing of their plan, and listen to alternative plans.	Depends on quality of contribution	High control. Agency defines what information is needed and how it will be used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public comment, Surveys, Public meetings, Informal consultation, Public notice and comment procedures</li> <li>Public hearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The better information contribute to better decisions?</li> <li>Did participation processes increase information and ideas on the issue?</li> </ul>
Setting goals. People reflect on what they want from the community	The public represent a broad range of value	Identify and incorporate public value into decisions	Interested citizens	Deliberation. Emphasis more intensive exchange using well reasoned argument and group problem solving	Discuss and debate competing values form collective vision, make recommendations to agency.	Moderate control. Agency allows deliberation to evolve without overt control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small group discussions, A Series of workshops, Citizens advisory committee, Citizen jurists, Mediation, negotiations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were goals created?</li> <li>If there was conflict, was it resolved?</li> <li>If there was need for more trust, was it increased?</li> </ul>
Implementation. Implement the project and reduce the conflict and mistrust that could impede implementation	Group is directly affected by the project. Group will play a strong role in implementation	Reduce conflict; build trust; implement decisions.	Interest groups.	Deliberation. Emphasise more intensive exchange, using well reasoned argument and group problem solving	High influence. Forge agreement among themselves about implementation responsibilities.	Low control. Agency provide technical resources and assurance to back participant agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small group discussions, Series of workshop, Citizens Advisory committee, Citizen jurists</li> <li>Mediation, Negotiation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Were decisions implemented?</li> <li>If there was conflict, was it resolved?</li> <li>If there was need for more trust, was it increased?</li> </ul>

Adopted from McKeown, R. (2002).

**Participation**

Participation is simply involvement. It emphasis total control by community members and de-emphasises as a matter of importance a lesser degree of government impositions. As observed by Barikor (2005) participation is a doctrine by which beneficiaries or people affected by any intervention are made to take active parts in all aspects of the processes that affect their lives and the environment intended to transform, the context and conditions within which they must live and upon which their well-being depends. Anyanwu (1981) claimed that democracy implies development of the people, by the people and for the people. This means that all development efforts directed at the people or their living environment must be conceived, planned and implemented with deep involvement of the people for which such development activity is meant. Thus, participation according to Anyanwu (1981) invites self-help, for when people participate in their own affairs, they are helping themselves.

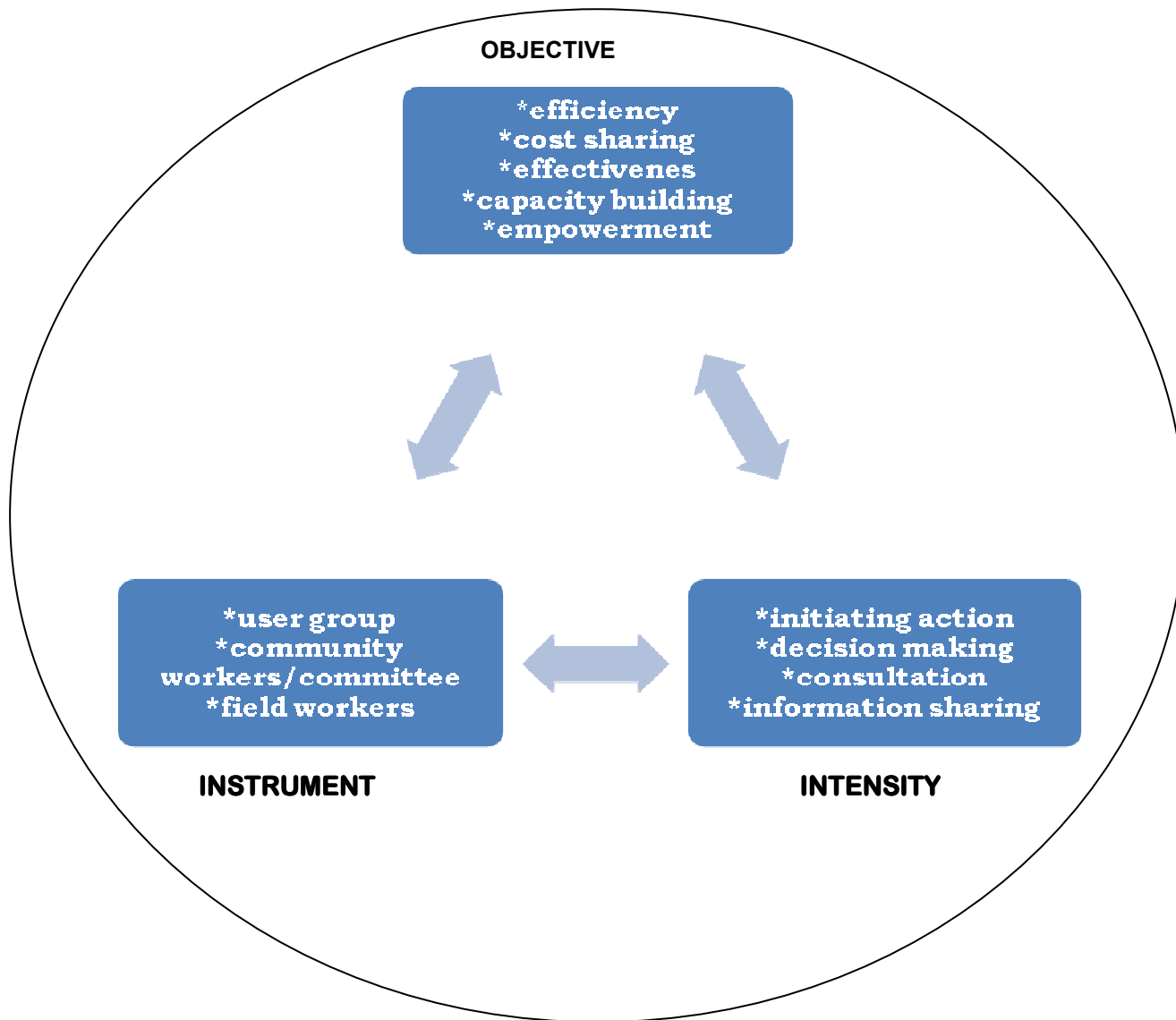
Participation for development is a popular phrase among policy makers and development practitioners. Adekola (2008) posited that participation cannot be divorced form any developmental programme if success and sustainability must be achieved. Participation is thereby seen as an educational empowering process in which people in partnership with those able to assist them identify their needs and increasingly assumes responsibility for themselves to plan, manage, control and access the collective actions that are necessary.

Agboola (1981) saw participation as the active process in which a person in question takes part in the initiation and implementation of decisions. Cohen and Uphoff (1980) maintained that participation is the involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions which enhance their well-being. Simmons (1994) regarded participation as the ability to control and manage resources not only in a sustainable way, but also in a manner that meets peoples' social, cultural and economic needs.

The United Nations (1978) observed that many developmental programmes and projects failed because the people are not effectively engaged in need and resources assessments. While establishing the need for peoples' participation in developmental programmes, Bruce (1964) gives the reasons for involving people in developing, planning and implementation as ethical, educational, promotional and protective. This he says is because development without peoples' co-operation and approval is unethical, since it assumes that the people themselves has no idea of their needs and how best the needs could be met.

Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) citing Anyanwu (1986) observed that the promotional values of citizens participation are that participation enhances faith in the possibility of success in the execution of programme designed for better living. It also promotes faith in the ultimate satisfaction of personal and community motives. It reassures faith in the integrity of authority and it evokes faith in the superiority of community purpose advanced by the personal aims of individual citizens. It is a catalyst by which human efforts are directed towards coping with continuously increasing interchanges of energies and satisfaction which are central to the growth of the community and it's people, of which it gives a psychological satisfaction. Chrystalbridge in Mckeown (2002) posited that civic involvement is essential to incorporating public values into decisions about important community issues. According to her public participation cannot only improve the quality of these decisions, but would also effectively resolve conflict among competing interests, build trust in institutions and educate and inform the public. The values of community participation as presented by Paul (1987) could be summarised as empowerment of the citizens, building capacity of beneficiaries, cost sharing, project effectiveness and project efficiency. A framework on the analysis of the interactions among actors in participatory development is shown in figure 1 below.

**Fig I: Framework on Interaction among Actors in Participatory Development**



**Adopted from Paul (1987); modified by Adekola (2010)**

The first column in fig.i contains the objectives to be achieved with peoples' participation. Apart from the general objectives contained in the objective column other programme specific objectives could be identified and inserted. The left column accommodates the human actors which are here referred to as instrument. This could accommodate as much

range of interested and professional groups as possible; but must be relevant to the project at hand. The right column contains the activities to achieve the objectives tagged intensity. More relevant programmes, specific and culturally determined activities could be introduced. The in and out arrow implies the interaction; while the instruments use their professional expertise,

experience and socio-cultural background to determine and moderate the activities in intensity, the intensity determines the effectiveness and success of achieving the objectives which is the essence of peoples involvement in the development activities. The two slanting arrows from the objective designate the feed back, determined by the extent of success or failure recorded in the objective. This feed back could come in form of improved field experience of the instrument that could be used for adjustment in activities of the intensity for improved peoples participation in future development projects.

**Indices of Participation**

The question of what action or activities of the people amounts to participation is fairly difficult to answer with precision. This is because according to Osuji (1991) not every action of community members can be considered as participation. He asserted that the indices of participation in a general conception include:

- a. Taking part in decision making to identify needs.
- b. Taking part in the mobilisation of resources and planning of project to be undertaken.
- c. Taking part in the activities to implement and put the project in place.
- d. Taking part in monitoring and evaluation of project.

The involvement of community members in any of the above activities is considered as participation. However, programme designers and executors possess the responsibility of determining what action of the people would amount to participation in a particular community development programme/project. This is importantly so because, community development programmes are designed to achieve different objectives thus what constitute participation in programmes may differ from project to project and from time to time, but most often still fall within the general indices of participation as conceived by Osuji (1991).

**Merits of Participation**

On the question of what benefits are accruable to the people and their community for participating in community development projects, Osuji (1991), Okediran (1998), Oyebamiji (2000) and Adekola (2004) share common views on the benefits that can be gotten from participation. A summary of their views show that participation engenders acceptability of programmes initiated by

government or non-governmental agencies through the people and for the people.

Participation breeds improved design of projects/programmes. Planners and executors through peoples participation take advantage of local technology and knowledge in the planning and designing of developmental programmes. Osuji (1991) specifically observed that participation brings into public consciousness irrational and emotional but useful elements which may not have been considered in the rational planning process.

Adequate mobilization of human and material resources needed for successful project execution is often made easier and possible through people's participation. Also, participation enables development to be built on the strength, tradition, beliefs and values of the local people thereby practically equipping the people with the skills and knowledge needed to handle their own affairs on a sustainable basis.

The involvement of community people in their own development makes cost sharing between the local population and outside agencies possible. Development projects in which the people are involved, articulating their needs themselves, have better chances of being valued; and are better sustained and maintained by the community. Participation enables the local people to assume full responsibility for the programmes/projects at a later date; through participation in developmental programmes, self-reliance is encouraged.

The benefits, accruable to all, from peoples' participation could be summarized with the position of Bridge (1974) where he listed five advantages to be gained from active participation in community affairs. These advantages are that:

- i. the citizens would bring about desired change by expressing one's desire, either individually or through a community group;
- ii. the individual learns how to make desired changes;
- iii. the citizens learns to understand and appreciate the individual needs and interest of all community groups;
- iv. the people learn how to resolve conflicting interests for the general welfare of the group;
- v. the individual begins to understand group dynamics as it applies to mixed groups.

Furthermore, it can be summed that community people participate in community activities when they

- 1. See positive change to be gained

2. Have appropriate organizational structure available to them for expressing their interests;
3. See some aspects of their way of life threatened
4. Feel committed to be supportive of the activity
5. Have better knowledge of an issue or situation at hand and
6. Feel comfortable in the group.

### **Planning for Peoples' Participation Community in Development**

Community development as a development strategy, heavily rely on the involvement and active participation of the people that is the beneficiaries in carrying out development programmes. While there is no doubt in the fact that community development programmes/projects are often planned, Williams (1980) observed that planning of participation is one of the most frequently overlooked elements of community development.

According to Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) need identification is the starting point for every community development programmes/projects. The community people are expected to actively participate at every stage of the development programme. Therefore, planning for participation in community development should start with need identification.

### **Planning Peoples' Participation in Need Identification for community Development**

Planning participation in need identification should involve the following steps.

**Step I. An informal survey/fact finding on identification of community concerned:** This stage emphasized that the change agents or the organization identify the particular community in which he intends to practice. This according to Adekola (2005) is necessary because communities are not homogenous in terms of size, population, level of education occupation and socio-economic status of residents. This informal survey would provide the community organizers with fore knowledge on some basic facts about the community and expected participants.

**Step II. Advocacy:** Announce the arrival of the organization to the beneficiaries or the entire community. This stage specifically requires humble communication of the arrival of the organization and expression of interest to carry out development project in the community; to the

community leaders, leader of the benefiting group and also seek their co-operation

**Step III. Identify the interest Groups and those to participate in the need identification process:** This step involves planning physical interaction with the interest groups and opinion leaders in the community. It involves educating them on the level of development in the community and the need for such intervention you are presenting.

**Step IV. Determine the language and instrument of need identification:** Here, the planners determine the language and instrument of need identification. Since our knowledge at stage three would have equipped us with enough background knowledge on the participants. Decision here should be guided by the level of education, culture, predominant occupation, predominant gender and even religious background of the proposed participants.

**Step V. Mobilise the participants for action:** Here plan is made to mobilise the participants for action in the need identification process. The mobilization could be through the various channels of communication. Here the participants are given enough education on what is expected of them at the next stage.

**Step VI. Circulate the instrument or organize the process of need identification:** This stage involves decisions on administration of instrument or the actual organization of the process of need identification. The planner should in-built in the plan, enough freedom and independence for the participants to freely respond or express themselves during the need identification process.

**Step VII. Feed back:** Here the organization through the change agent communicates the findings to the community. This comes in form of the felt needs and the priority need identified. The feedback should first be communicated to the community and opinion leaders and later to the whole community. The plan should accommodate strategies to guarantee their co-operation throughout the implementation of the identified need.

**Step VIII. Formulate detailed plan of action for implementation:** This stage involves designing plan for peoples participation in the implementation of the project identified. This



should involve matching paper works with realities on the field. Relevant and highly intelligent members of the community must be involved. This is to ensure that the plan is not alien to the stakeholders and they know what is expected of them at the implementation stage.

**Step IX. Evaluation:** Here the programme organizers and the change agent in collaboration with the programme beneficiaries evaluate the entire process of need identification with special focus on the quantity and quality of peoples' participation. This is for the purpose of deriving and documenting lessons for future project plan development.

### **Planning Peoples' Participation in Resource Mobilisation for Community Development**

Community development involves five main stages i.e need identification, resource mobilisation, implementation, and utilisation and evaluation stages. While utilization stage involve the usage of the community development project by the beneficiaries and may not require serious planning for peoples participation, other stages require adequate planning for peoples participation for desired success to be recorded.

Succinctly put, resource mobilization is the harnessing of the resources required for the implementation of a community development programme/project. Planning for participation in resource mobilization involves activities as shown in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Participatory Framework for Resource Mobilisation in Community Development.**

Stage	Activities		Remark
	Programme Organisers	Stakeholders	
1	Identify resources required for programme execution	Identify what is available within the community	Such resources could be human, material or/and financial
2	Communicate the required resources to the stakeholders	Identify what is available locally and suggest sources for others	Document the available ones and list out the suggested sources of the others
3	Identify the sources	Suggest link persons	Identify relevant other local and external sources
4	Cost	Relevant professionals in the community to participate in costing	Identify financial experts in and outside the community and involve them.
5	Identify relevant people for resource mobilization	Show enough interest in resource mobilization and give information on hidden human resources	Communicate the required actions to the people
6	Form committee	Volunteer and accept nomination	Give terms of reference and time limit
7	Propel the people into action	Move out to collect resources. Accept other responsibilities that may be assigned	Monitor the process
8	Collate the result	Submit all resources collected to the committee	Monitor the process and give report
9	Evaluation	Give report on success and failure recorded and difficulties encountered	Document lessons for future usage
10	Feed back	Receive and process information	Give detailed information on success and failure recorded and how to make up for the rest.

Adekola, G. (2009) Field work

### **Planning Peoples' Participation in Implementation of Community Development Programmes**

The most crucial stage in community development is the programme implementation stage. This is when paper works are translated into actions. Williams (1980) while presenting the lessons of participatory community development observed that, communities do not only have a right to participate in decisions that affect their living and working conditions, genuine participation requires community involvement in all the phases of the programme/project. This means that involvement of the people at the implementation stage of community development

programme is a major element towards the achievement of success. If community people must be involved in project implementation to achieve success, such involvement must be planned to be effective and efficient. Planning peoples' participation in programme implementation should involve the following steps or stages.

**Step I. Re-examination of programme objectives:** This involves a critical appraisal of the set goals of the programme. This is to give room for adjustments where necessary; since it is the programme objectives that all hands are on deck to achieve.

**Step II. Statement of the objectives of participation:** Here, programme organisers in collaboration with the change agent and the people determine and make clear to all the actors what are to be achieved with their participation. Such objectives of participation could be to reduce cost, to achieve acceptance, to inculcate change or skills in the people or just to carry the people along in programme designed to improve their life and living standard. In addition, their may be some other programme specific objectives.

**Step III. Identify stages involved in the programme:** Here programme planners summarise in broad headings the stages involved in the programme implementation. According to Oyebamiji and Adekola (2008) each stage in programme implementation requires different skills and community people have different abilities with diverse experiences that could come to play at the various stages. However, efforts should be made to avoid a situation where one person or group would dominate all the stages.

**Step IV. Determine and list out who would participate at each stage:** This stage involves sharing people to tasks or tasks to the people. This would make peoples participation easy, effective and efficient. Since you already know who and who would participate at a particular stage, inform them so that they also know when to come on board and what their roles would be.

**Step V. Identify tools and equipments required for participation at each stage:** Here, the planners identify necessary material resources that would be needed to make participants function effectively at each stage. Capacity building is also essential to promote equitable participation of men, women and youths in community development project implementation. As observed by Williams (1980) communities have hidden resources for participation in development programmes, only capacity building can release such resources.

**Step VI. Mobilise the participants into action:** This implies the commencement of the programme/project implementation. Here the programme planners plan for the use of various mobilisation strategies to mobilise the people into action. However, all elements of force and coercion should be avoided.

**Step VII. Manage the participants:** This involves planning for leadership roles to organise, motivate, supervise and co-ordinate the participants to work strictly within the programme plan.

**Step VIII. Evaluation:** Here, the planners design the instrument to evaluate the entire process of participation. This is to bring out lesson for future improvement. Various evaluation tools are available; determine which one to be adopted and how to use it.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examines the issue of planning peoples' participation in community development. In doing this, it established that despite the consensus among development practitioners that project beneficiaries must be involved at all stages of community development programmes designed to improve their welfare; planning of participation is one of the most frequently overlooked elements of community development. This paper therefore concludes that planning peoples' participation is significant to the achievement of effective and efficient participation. The writer also presented a framework for planning peoples' participation in community development. Based on the fact that peoples' participation is essential for success in community development programmes and that effective participation is also dependent on its adequate planning, it is recommended that:

1. Every stage and activities of community development programme should be well planned.
2. Peoples' involvement in community development programme is of paramount importance since charity makes community ever dependent upon aids.
3. Experienced community development experts should always be involved in planning peoples' participation in community development programmes; as their field experience would count in difficult situations.
4. Sustainability should always be a guiding principle in all plans for peoples' participation.
5. In planning peoples' participation, equitable opportunities should always be created for all units of the community/stakeholders to participate.

6. Efforts should be made to avoid every element of discrimination and personal sentiments that can weaken the base and achievement of the plan for peoples' participation.

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