

## PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN IVO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA

\*<sup>1</sup>Ezeh, A.N., <sup>1</sup>Nwibo, S.U., <sup>1</sup>Umeh, G.N. and <sup>2</sup>Eze, A.V.

\*<sup>1</sup>Department of Agricultural Economics, Management & Extension,  
Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki

<sup>2</sup>Department of Agribusiness Management and Trade,  
Kenyatta University, Kenya

\*Corresponding Author's email: [annezeh2007@yahoo.com](mailto:annezeh2007@yahoo.com)

### ABSTRACT

Effective participation of youths in community development projects has not been given considerable scholarly attention. Hence, the need for this study that assessed participation of youth groups in community development projects in Ivo Local Government Area (LGA) in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised all members of registered youth groups in the study area. Based on this, the study employed multistage random and purposive sampling techniques for the selection of a total of 120 respondents. The study used primary data sourced with the aid of structured questionnaire that was administered to the sampled respondents as interview schedule. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data generated from the field survey. The findings showed that youth groups engaged in five sectors of rural community development in the area. These include: providing labour for construction of classroom blocks (52.5%), periodic environmental sanitation and cleanliness of their communities (65.0%), organizing youth groups to form cooperatives for sourcing and distribution of farm inputs (66.7%). Others are filling of potholes and repair of damaged portions of rural roads (100.0%), construction of rural feeder roads ((90.0%), collection and remittance of electricity bills to EEDC (54.2%) and membership of vigilante groups for maintenance of law and order in the rural communities (62.5%). Furthermore, the result indicated that apart from contributing physical labour ( $\bar{x} = 3.0$ ), and project implementation ( $\bar{x} = 2.5$ ) which recorded very high and high responses respectively, other complementary activities of community development such as conception of project ( $\bar{x} = 2.2$ ), project budgeting and planning ( $\bar{x} = 2.0$ ), mobilization of fund & material resources ( $\bar{x} = 2.3$ ), project supervision ( $\bar{x} = 1.8$ ) and monitoring and evaluation ( $\bar{x} = 2.1$ ) were rated low. The varimax rotated matrix on constraints to youth groups' participation in community development projects in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State based on items that clustered and loaded high, identified social, institutional and economic factors as constraints to youth groups' participation in community development projects in the area. The study recommended integration of youth groups into all stages of projects development, especially at conception, initiation, planning, monitoring, evaluation and supervision of community development projects as well as improve their access to credit facilities.

**Keywords:** Implementation, participation, planning, rural communities, and youth group

### Introduction

Community development is a measure which enables rural people to recognize their ability to identify their problems and mobilize local resources to build a better life for themselves. Community development emphasizes self help, mutual support, neighbourhood build-up, integration and the development of political decision makers (Smith, 2006). Oyebamiji (1992) in Akinboye, Ayanwuyi, Kuponiyi and Oyetoro (2007) defined community development as a process and a movement. As a process, it lays emphasis on what happens to people psychologically in the course of

community development. Individuals in this process are assisted through organized effort to acquire the attitude, skill and concept required for their participation in activities designed to promote their well-being. Thus, community development process is a problem solving process. As a movement, community development is seen as involving movement from one point of dissatisfaction to a point of satisfaction or to another point of dissatisfaction in the life of community. It stresses the idea being interpreted and promoted by the citizens of the community.

Ekong (2003) conceived community development in developing countries as generally entailing emphasis on participation initiative and self-help by the local community people. He further stated that involvement of people in programme entails understanding of the nature of the problem at hand, the need or interest involved, those directly involved and those peripherally affected. This prompted Ogbuozobe (1997) to conclude that the totality of community development process and movement is embedded in the principle of citizen participation which enjoys, whatever is done to improve the welfare of the people. Agboola (1998) maintained that participation is the process by which the person in question takes part in the initiation and implementation of decision. However, since development can be approached from the direction of self-help; a way of improving the development of communities, it is important to understanding the roles played by youths in community development.

Youths according to the Nigeria's National Youth Development Policy (2001) cited in Agbelemoge and Adebajo (2013) comprise all young people aged 18 to 35, who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category of people also represents the most active, the most volatile and the most vulnerable segments of the population (Agbelemoge and Adigun, 2006). In the pre-independence era, many Africa communities including Nigeria witnessed a vibrant, community development process through the participation of both youths and elderly people. During this period and beyond, community infrastructures were constructed out of the community efforts, with immense youth participation. In view of all these, youth participation could be regarded as pre-requisites for overall development of the community (UN, 2002). Farinde (1999) was of the view that youths' participation in community development projects can increase social responsibility and decrease risky behaviour. Moreover, youths' participation in development projects motivates them to rise against the negative effect of social and economic hardship (Lisette, 2000).

Odebode (2000) noted that youths' participation in community development projects is crucial; however, he observed that there are several factors that hinder effective participation of youths in community development projects. Among these factors are low income of farm families which is particularly serious and unimaginable, low level of functional literacy, and frequent obligation to work as a family or casual labour from a very early age. Other factors that constrained rural youth participation in

development are long hours of work during the busy or peak season and virtually unemployed during the dry season or slack period. They are expected to contribute in most cases, if not all, earning in support of the family also they marry very early mostly on the choice of their parent, but their lack of formal education makes them to be unwilling and generally unable to mix with more literate youths, even of the same age group and prefer to leave the rural areas and farming in particular and then are faced with diminishing farm size and income with the prospect for living near or below the poverty level (Ayanwuyi *et al.*, 2007).

The success and strength of community development projects like educational project, water project, electrification project and healthcare project in which youths may participate depends on cultural elements, level of income, type of education and the assistance made available to them (Burr, 1996). However, many national and international development agencies as well as policy makers have tended to overlook the historical and contemporary role of youths in community development efforts to identify and prioritize their problems and seek solutions to them. It is apparent that indigenous knowledge and decision making operationalized through youth association such as Age grade association and occupational association has not been well incorporated into development framework (Awa and Ema, 1992).

Worse still, in many developing countries like Nigeria, effective involvement of youths in community development projects has not been given much consideration. This is because often time youths are socially excluded from the societal plan of action (World Bank, 2007). The social exclusion of majority of the youths in community development activities is prevalent in the developing countries including Nigeria. In many of these countries, little is done to collect information on rural youth (Kevin, 2004). As a result, knowledge about rural youth's livelihoods and their participation in community development projects remains fragmented among service providers. Often, key rural policy document make no mention of youth at all and even when they are mentioned, it does not reflect informed policy. This trend, thus, casts doubt on the possible existence of empirical records of youth organizations' participation in community development projects in the study area. To fill this gap in knowledge, the study set-out to achieve the following objectives: identify and characterize the various community development projects executed by the youth groups in the area; ascertain the extent of participation of youth groups in community development activities in the area; and

identify the constraints to youth groups' participation in community development projects in the area.

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out in Ivo Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The LGA is made-up of five (5) autonomous communities, namely: Ishiagu, Isiaka, Ndiokoro ukwu, Nzerern and Obinagu. The area is located on latitude 17<sup>0</sup>21'N and longitude 17<sup>0</sup>47'E. It has a population of 121,363 people, comprising 62,049 males and 59,314 females (NPC, 2006). Its vegetation is derived Savannah. The area naturally is endowed with mineral deposits crude oil and limestone deposit at Crushed Rock in Ano communities, (Amaokwe, Ngwogwo and Okue, 2010). The area is blessed with abundant and fertile farmland which supports agricultural activities (Ebonyi Online, 2013). Agriculturally, the LGA is known beyond Ebonyi State frontiers. The major occupation of the people is farming. The cropping system is mainly mixed cropping, mixed farming, intercropping as well as sole cropping. The main food crops cultivated in the area include rice, yam, cassava, maize, okra, garden egg, cocoyam, and sweet potatoes, vegetables among others. They also engage in the production of permanent crops such as oil palm, plantain and banana plantation etc. The people also rear livestock in small-scale such as goat, sheep, poultry and fishery. The people also engage in other occupations such as stone crushing, pottery, trading, craft work, civil service, among others, to supplement their farm income. The LGA is known for its inhabitants' engagement in various farmers' groups and associations. Hence, several registered and unregistered farmers groups abound in the area. The population of the study comprised all the youths who are members of a registered associations/organizations in the area. In this regards, the list of registered youth groups in the study area was obtained from the local government headquarter, Ishiaka. Based on this, this study employed multistage random and purposive sampling techniques for the selection of respondents. The procedure involved, firstly, the random selection of four (4) communities out of the five (5) autonomous communities in the LGA. Secondly, three (3) villages having youth groups that have ongoing community development projects were purposively selected to give a total of twelve (12) villages. Thirdly, ten (10) members of these youth groups in these villages were randomly selected, bringing the total to one hundred and twenty (120) respondents that formed the sample size for the study. Data for this study were collected mainly from primary source using structured questionnaire that were administered to the sampled respondents. Additionally, secondary data were

sourced from records of youth organizations, local government publications, journals, government publications, and text books to complement the primary data. The study employed descriptive statistics of frequency count, means and percentage to analyzed objective (i) while objective (ii) was achieved using mean score derived from 4-point Likert scale, and inferential statistics of principal factor was used to analyse objective (iii).

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Community Development Projects Executed by the Youth Groups in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State**

This section assessed the various community development projects which youth groups have participated in. The result as presented in Table 1 shows the various community development projects embarked upon by youths' groups in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State. From the result it was observed that the youth groups engaged in five sectors of rural community development in the area, based on the threshold responses point of 50.0%. Under educational sector, 52.5% of youths provided labour for construction of classroom blocks. In the health sector, 65.0% of the youths engaged in periodic environmental sanitation and cleanliness of their communities. In the agricultural sector, 66.7% of the youths agreed that they engaged in organizing youth groups to form cooperatives for securing and distribution of farm inputs to members. In terms of construction and maintenance of rural roads, 100.0% of the youths were involved in filling of potholes and repair of damaged portions of the roads while 90.0% of them partook in the construction of rural feeder roads. Under rural electrification, 54.2% of them engaged in collection and remittance of electricity bills to EEDC and finally, 62.5% youths were members of vigilant groups for maintenance of law and order in the rural communities.

The result is an indication that although youth groups contribute to development of their respective rural communities, their participation could be felt from the point of contributing physical labour, mobilization and engaging youths in agricultural activities, and repairs and maintenance of already established projects. For instance, they could not initiate and execute new capital intensive projects like building of health centers, digging of boreholes, construction classroom blocks, and initiate rural electricity projects. This is in agreement with the findings of Aminu (2012) that youths contribute to community development projects through: educating the rural community on the use of improved seeds or farming techniques, clearing and draining of drainages/culverts, sinking of ordinary dug-out wells, renovation of clinics, health centres/dispensaries in

the rural areas, construction of rural feeder roads, and youths clubs enlightenment programme on HIV/AIDS, Women and Children trafficking, child labour and VVS. Similar findings have been attributed to Ezema (2014) among youth groups in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State.

### **Extent of Participation of Youth Groups in Community Development Activities in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State**

Table 2 shows the result of the extent of participation of youth groups in community development activities in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State. The result indicates that apart from contributing physical labour ( $\bar{x} = 3.0$ ), and project implementation ( $\bar{x} = 2.5$ ) which recorded very high and high responses respectively, other complementary activities of community development such as conception of project ( $\bar{x} = 2.2$ ), project budgeting and planning ( $\bar{x} = 2.0$ ), mobilization of fund & material resources ( $\bar{x} = 2.3$ ), project supervision ( $\bar{x} = 1.8$ ) and monitoring and evaluation ( $\bar{x} = 2.1$ ) were rated low. This implies that while youth groups participate actively high in contributing physical labour and project implementation, they were not considered and carried along in conception, planning, mobilization of resources, supervision and monitoring and evaluation of community development projects. This could be the root cause of under-participation of youth groups in community development projects. The non-inclusion of youth groups in the policy framework of community development undermines their capacity to participate effectively in community development projects.

The finding is in consonance with that of Ezema (2014) who reported that the extent of youth's involvement in the planning and monitoring and evaluation of self-help community development projects was low in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. However, the finding is contrary to the same author report that youths were not effectively involved in the implementation of self-help community development projects in the said local government area. The result also corroborates that of Yusuf (2006), who reported that greater part of stakeholders in developing countries were not involved in planning of community development projects.

### **Constraints to Youth Groups' Participation in Community Development Projects in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State**

The result in Table 3 shows varimax rotated matrix on constraints to youth groups' participation in community development projects in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State. Based on items that clustered and loaded high, three (3) factors were identified and

extracted, namely; social (Factor I), institutional (Factor II) and economic (Factor III). These three therefore, represent the principal factors and constraints to youth groups' participation in community development projects in Ivo LGA of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. From the result, social factors constraining youth groups' participation in community development projects were: non-inclusion of youths in community development activities (0.856), and mismanagement and embezzlement of funds (0.614). Institutional factors which arose out of poor government's policy framework for engaging youths into active participation in community development projects were: poor leadership skills among youths (0.835), political rivalry and conflict (0.899), poor government support (0.871), and lack of improved farming & processing equipment (0.862). Finally, specific economic factors hindering youth groups' participation in community development projects were: increasing rural-urban migration (0.856) and lack/inadequate access to fund (0.812). The willingness of youths to participate in community development projects can be realized provided they are carried along from the stage of initialization to completion of project, in addition to their availability in the rural areas. UNFPA (2006) noted that youths are resilient and have the capacity to cope with challenges of community development. However, FAO/ILO/UNESCO (2009) observed that how youth groups are handled will determine their availability for such development project, while United Nation (UN) (2011) is of the view that this youthful resource could be lost to migration if the youth are not integrated into the mainstream of rural development activities. The increasing rural – urban migration of youths in search of greener pastures constitutes serious setback to youth groups' participation in rural development exercise.

The finding corroborates that of Ezema (2014) who found that poor educational background of most youths, incompetent community youth organizations, conflict in the community, rural-urban migration of majority of the youths and lack of clear ideas of what the projects have to offer constrained youths from effective participation in self-help community development projects in Nsukka L.G.A. Similarly, Aminu (2012) identified problems to youths' participation in community development project in Nigeria to include lack of adequate funding, lack of basic equipment, fraud, dishonesty, and corruption among members/leaders, politics, rivalries and envy among others. Odebode (2000) noted that youths' participation in community development projects is crucial, however, he observed that there several factors that hinder effective participation of youths in

community development projects. Among these factors are low income of farm families which is particularly serious and unimaginable, low level of functional literacy.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that youths' groups participate in community development efforts although their participation was generally low. The youth groups' participation in community development projects were mainly felt in contributing physical labour for execution of projects, mobilization and engagement of youths in agricultural activities, and repairs and maintenance of already established projects. Consequently, most of the youth groups could not initiate and execute new projects such as building of health centers, digging of boreholes, construction of classroom blocks, and rural electricity projects because they were excluded from the framework of community development initiatives. Based on this, the study recommends that community leaders, community development agents and practitioners should integrate youth groups into every stage of projects' development, especially at the stage of conception, initiation, planning, monitoring, evaluation and supervision of community development projects. It also recommends improving their access to fund in forms of grants and subventions. This will enhance effective participation of youths in community development projects.

### References

- Agbelemoge, A. and Adebajo, S.A. (2013). Participation of youth in rural leadership development activities in Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(4): 278-283.
- Agbelemoge, A. and Adigun, C.O. (2006). Student's Participation in School Farming Activities (SFAs) in Afijio LGA of Oyo State, Nigeria. *Ogun Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, 4: 89-94.
- Agboola, O.A. (1998). *Roles of grassroot agencies in rural development*. Jos: Gamek Press, 6p.
- Aminu, A.A. (2012). Youths and community development in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 2(7): 27-30.
- Awa, E.A. and Ema, A.O. (1992). *Political Factors in Rural Development in Nigeria*. Proceedings of the 1992 Annual Conference of Nigeria Economic Society, Ibadan.
- Ayanwuyi, E., Akinboye, O.A. and Olaniyi, O.A. (2007). Youth participation in rural development projects in Surulere Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. *The Social Sciences*, 2 (3): 312-317.
- Burr, I.T. (1996). *Evaluation of the role of young farmers: Club as strategy for rural youth Extension in Bomo State Nigeria*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Ibadan, pp: 20-34.
- Ebonyi Online (2013). Towns and villages in ebonyi State. Retrieved from [www.ebonyistate.gov.ng/town.aspx](http://www.ebonyistate.gov.ng/town.aspx), on 24/05/2018.
- Ekong, E.E. (2003). *Rural Sociology: An Introduction and Analysis of Rural Nigeria*. Uyo: Dove Educational Publishers.
- Ezema, M.C. (2014). *Assessment of youths involvement in self-help community development projects in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State*. Unpublished M.Ed Thesis, submitted to the Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
- FAO/ILO/UNESCO (2009). Training and Employment Opportunities to Address Poverty Among Rural Youth: A Synthesis Report. UNESCO: Bangkok.
- Farinde, A.J. (1999). *Effectiveness of extension methods: Used in disseminating of improves Agricultural technology in Lagos State, Nigeria*. Unpublished M.phil thesis, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
- Kevin, B. (2004). *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lisette, B. (2000). Rural Families program subproject Report. Promoting Rural Youth Development.
- National Population Commission (NPC) (2006). National population census report. Abuja: NPC
- Ogbuozobe, J.E. (1997). *A comparative analysis of community (self-help) development effort in Nigeria*. Occasional Paper No. 7, Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISIER), Ibadan.
- Odebode, S.O. (2000). *Youth participation in Rural Development Oyo State*. Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Smith, C. (2006). *Youth in an age of uncertainty in Carnegie United Kingdom trust. The Carnegie youth people initiative years of decision*. Leicester: Youth Work Press.
- UNFPA (2006). Moving Young People [online]. [www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org) (Accessed on 16th February, 2013).
- UN (2011). United Nations World youth report [online]. UNWorldYouthReport.org. (Accessed on 15th February 2017).
- Yusuf, J.I. (2006). *Approaches to effective implementation of community development*

projects. Akure: City of Gold Publishing Company.  
 United Nations (2002). United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific. Youth participation manual. Retrieved from [www.ayo.org.au/resources/participation](http://www.ayo.org.au/resources/participation).

World Bank (2007). *Tools for Institutional, Political, and Social Analysis of Policy Reform: A Sourcebook for Development Practitioners*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

**Table 1: Distribution of community development projects executed by the youths' groups**

Project executed by sector	Activities executed	Frequency (n=120)	Percentage
Education	Cutting of grasses in primary & secondary schools	23	19.2
	Planting of trees in schools	2	1.7
	Providing labour for construction of classroom blocks	63	52.5
Health & sanitation	Periodic environmental sanitation and cleanliness	78	65.0
	Repair & maintenance of bore holes	56	46.7
	Organising enlightenment campaigns on preventable diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria etc	15	12.5
Agriculture	Organizing youths' groups to form cooperatives for sourcing & distribution of farm inputs to members	80	66.7
Construction & maintenance of rural roads	Filling of potholes & repair of damage portions of rural roads	120	100.0
	Construction of rural feeder roads	108	90.0
Rural electrification	Construction and opening of blocked drainages	92	76.7
	Repairs of fallen electric poles	40	33.3
	Collection & remittance of electricity bills to EEDC	65	54.2
Law & order	Membership of vigilant groups	75	62.5

Source: Field Survey, 2017. \*Multiple responses recorded

**Table 2: Extent of participation of youth groups in community development activities**

Community development activities	Mean Score ( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision Rule
Conception of project	2.2	Disagreed
Project budgeting & planning	2.0	Disagreed
Mobilization of fund & material resources	2.3	Disagreed
Contributing physical labour	3.0	Agreed
Project implementation	2.5	Agreed
Project supervision	1.8	Disagreed
Monitoring and evaluation	2.1	Disagreed
Grand mean	2.3	Disagreed

Source: Field survey data, 2017

**Table 3: Varimax rotation on constraints to youth groups' participation in community development projects**

<b>Constraints</b>	<b>Factor I Social</b>	<b>Factor II Institutional</b>	<b>Factor III Economic</b>
Non-inclusion of youths in community development activities	<b>0.815</b>	0.389	0.350
Increasing rural-urban migration	0.380	0.189	<b>0.856</b>
Lack/inadequate access to fund	0.203	0.379	<b>0.812</b>
Mismanagement and embezzlement of funds	<b>0.614</b>	0.279	0.384
Poor leadership skills among youths	0.368	<b>0.835</b>	0.184
Political rivalry and conflict	0.202	<b>0.899</b>	0.303
Poor government support	0.360	<b>0.871</b>	0.210
Lack of cooperation among youths	0.693	0.555	0.329
Lack of improved farming & processing equipment	0.283	<b>0.862</b>	0.355
High youths illiteracy	0.800	0.377	0.312

Source: Field survey data, 2017