

# Influence of Citizens' Participation on Community Development in Bonny Local Government Area, Rivers State.

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**Abstract:** The study investigated Influence of citizens' participation on community development in Bonny local government area, Rivers State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The population of the study comprised forty (40) leaders and three hundred and seventy (370) members in 4 communities in Bonny local government area, Rivers State. The sample size for the study comprised four hundred and ten (40 leaders, and 370 members) respondents. The entire population was used as a census due to its manageable size. The instrument titled "Influence of Citizens Participation on Community Development Questionnaire (ICPCDQ)" was used for data collection. The ICPCDQ questionnaire was structured using the four point Likert rating scale response pattern of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4points, Agreed (A)= 3points, Disagree (D) = 2points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1point. The researcher employed the face and content validity methods and established a reliability of the instrument through the test-retest technique. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistics was used to arrive at a reliability index of 0.80. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions, while Z-test statistics was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study found among others, that leaders and members agreed that citizens' participation in planning school building projects influence community development in Port Harcourt Local Government Area, Rivers State; there is no significant difference in the mean responses of leaders and members of community-based organization on ways citizens' participation in monitoring and evaluation of rural road projects influences community development in Bonny Local Government Area, Rivers State. It was concluded that the participation of citizens in community development such as school buildings and road construction influenced community development. It was recommended among others that government and development agencies engaged in building schools in rural community should engage citizens actively in the projects as this will build their capacities and confidence to engage in other community development programme/projects themselves.

**Keywords:** Community, Development, Community Development, Participation, Citizen Participation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Community has been conceptualized and defined in diverse ways, it has enjoyed a long existence and usage among scholars. Kobani & Alozie in Wami, Deekor & Nwafor (2021) took a careful review of literature on this subject and revealed

that the term community is not static. Different writers have defined community development in different ways, highlighting distinct factors and characteristics. Some define it from the geographical point of view while others define it depending on their area of specialization. Hornby (2004) defined community as a group of persons having the same religion, race, occupation, etc., or with common interest etc. Frankenberg cited in Onyeozu (2007) defines the term community as a territorially bounded social system within which people live, sharing common social, economic, and cultural characteristics. Oni & Ohiani in Onyenemezu (2008) defines community as a territorially bounded social system within which people live in harmony, love, intimacy and share common social, economic and cultural characteristics. In ensuring that community plays an intense role in employing its citizens in active participation, it is also inevitable to ensure that the citizens are properly informed and educated not only through the formal training, but also through each-one-teach-one strategy as cited in Adekola, Taylor, & Wami (2021). They averred that Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Technique (REFLECT) and the story telling strategy Virtually, everyone knows the community they belong to and consciously understands to some extent when there is overlap, but it is completely a herculean task to put this understanding into acceptable and harmonious definition. In this case, the existence and operation of common interests within the realm of social interaction can be used as veritable tools to identify a community.

Development is a humanizing process which involves a transformation of the total living conditions and environment of the people. This means that oppressive conditions which make it difficult for people to develop and actualize their potentials should be done away with. Improving as a concept is difficult to define, meaning different people depend on their expertise. For example, as noted by Oyebamiji & Adekola (2008), if an economist sees improvements in Gross National Products (GNP), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and an increase on the outcomes of the people in the system, the political scientist will see the development as well as the restoration and peace of the natural environment, for psychologists, development is related to human mind and

body, while adult educators view development as an improvement in the living standards of the individual and their community (Kobani & Alozie, 2015). In shedding more light to what development means, Imhabekhai (2009) views development as the general improvement in economic, social, and political conditions of the whole society in terms of reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality, injustice, insecurity, ecological imbalances and unemployment within the context of a growing economy.

Different writers have defined community development in different ways, highlighting distinct factors and characteristics. In agreement to this fact, Ezimah (2004) views community development as a process of special action in which people of the community organize themselves for planning, define their own common and individual needs and problems, make group and individual plans to meet their needs and solve problems, execute their plans with maximum reliance on the community resources and supplement these resources only when necessary with resources and materials from governmental and non-governmental agencies outside the community. In classification of the subject community development some scholars came up with the fact that for community development to be imminent there shall be government presence. This led to the opinion of Barikor (2003) who perceives community development as an integrated process by which the efforts of the citizens (i.e., the rural system) are united with those of governmental authorities and voluntary agencies to improve the social, economic, and cultural conditions of the community, the very index of development posture of the nation.

They key participation is the foundation of the community development phase. It is a rich concept which means different things to different people in different places. Collaboration is a powerful concept that can mean different things to different people in different activities. A review of the literature on how to operate in different contexts reveals different definitions of cooperation. For example, argue that; the term participation was used to promote community capacity and self-esteem, but was also responsible for the extension of the state authority. Hornby in Oyenemezu (2004) perceives participation to mean the act of taking part in an activity or event. It simply means taking active part in an activity.

Citizens' participation in community development strengthens the structure of community life and improves independent organizations. A citizen is a person who has lived in the community for many years, whether by birth or residence. Citizens' participation in community development is an activity or activities of a specific ethnic group. This means that a person who needs to be involved in an event must have an involvement or passion for an activity with a certain set of values, beliefs, thoughts, and ideas (Courtney in Onyenemezu & Asuvo, 2013). It is important that citizens engage in social work for community development, because when they are involved in activities such as: community use, local development or rural areas and the development of urban

areas as well etc., they contribute to the quality of service and there is no waste of work. This is because the public is part of the planning, evaluation, and implementation process.

Citizens' participation in community development seeks to engage local population in development projects. It has taken a variety of forms since it emerged in the 1970s, when it was introduced as an important part of the basic needs approach to development. There is the universal acceptance of local government as vital instrument for rural and urban development, irrespective of the ideological differences of societies and levels of development

Citizens' participation in school building project and community development, Ojuah (2012) who posited that community development itself is filled with lots of benefits. It is only when citizens come together that they can tap those benefits. The main purpose of community development is to de-emphasize regurgitate reliance on government to bring development to communities. Furthermore, Ajay & Oni as cited in Oyebamiji & Adekola (2008), averred that organization is a collection of human beings with a common goal. It is a network of relationship among individuals and activities. It involves a process of executive function aimed at ensuring that resources, activities and authority are so coordinated to achieve prescribed goals.

As regards citizens' participation in rural road construction and community development, sustainable development is a long-term development that includes the availability of process, safety, and health in an environmentally friendly way. Sustainable development preserves, protects, uses, and manages resources (both human and material) and has been a development process, so today we are improving our livelihoods. According to the US Department of Labour and Education (2013), the word sustainability means a continuation of the strategic plan, principles, and efforts to achieve the desired results. While many developers may believe that the development of the project involved finding equipment that can be continued after the development period, to ensure that long-term sustainability and circumstances of the country, as well as personnel and industry need.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study was to investigate influence of citizens' participation on community development of Bonny Local Government Area in Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study include the following:

1. Examine the ways citizens' participation in planning school building projects influences community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Identify the ways citizens' participation in monitoring and evaluation of rural road construction projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State.

### Research Questions

1. In what ways does citizens' participation in planning school building projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. In what ways does citizens' participation in monitoring and evaluation of rural road construction projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State?

### Hypotheses

Ho<sub>1</sub>. 1. There is no significant difference in the mean responses of leaders and members of community-based organizations on ways citizens' participation in planning school building projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design with a population of four hundred and ten (410) community-based organization (370 members and 40 leaders) in four communities in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. The sample size for the study comprised four hundred and ten (410) respondents, comprising forty (40) leaders and three hundred and seventy (370) members of community-based organization in Bonny Local Government Area which was obtained through the census sampling technique. The census technique enabled the researcher to make use of all the

population as the sample due to its manageable size. A self-structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Citizens' Participation on Community Development Questionnaire (ICPCDQ)" was used to collect data from the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was established through the test-retest technique. The responses were collated and analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistics that yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80 index. Four hundred and ten (410) copies of the questionnaire (40 leaders and 370 members of community based organizations) were administered to respondents and was retrieved on the spot.

Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while the hypothesis was tested using the z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The criterion mean was used in scoring the questionnaire. Items above the criterion mean was tagged "Agreed" while those below the criterion mean was tagged "Disagreed". A null hypothesis was accepted when the calculated z-value is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 and rejected when the calculated z-value is greater than the critical z-value of 1.96.

## III. RESULTS

The results obtained in this study after data analysis were presented and analyzed below.

**Research Question 1:** In what ways does citizens' participation in planning school building projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 4.1: Mean Responses on the Ways Citizens' Participation in Planning School Building Projects Influence Community Development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. N = 410

| S/N | Items  | Leaders N = 40 |             |               | Members N= 370 |             |               |
|-----|--|----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|
|     |  | $\bar{x}$      | SD          | Remarks       | $\bar{x}$      | SD          | Ren           |
| 1.  | Citizens' participation in planning promotes community development in terms of building confidence among the people.                                 | 3.13           | 0.66        | Agreed        | 3.19           | 0.09        | Agreed        |
| 2.  | Citizens' participation in planning school building reduces standard project execution.  | 3.05           | 0.53        | Agreed        | 3.10           | 0.71        | Agreed        |
| 3.  | Through citizens' participation in planning school building project, quality work will be delivered.   | 3.08           | 0.87        | Agreed        | 2.59           | 0.66        | Agreed        |
| 4.  | Citizens' participation in planning school building project promotes unity throughout the period of the project.                                     | 2.68           | 0.51        | Agreed        | 3.01           | 0.52        | Agreed        |
| 5.  | Citizens' participation in planning school building project enables some skills that can help them and their community in future.                    | 3.20           | 0.70        | Agreed        | 3.11           | 0.65        | Agreed        |
| 6.  | Skills acquired by citizens' during the planning and execution of school project cab help them set up their own workshop when discharged.            | 2.96           | 0.54        | Agreed        | 2.74           | 0.54        | Agreed        |
| 7.  | Citizens' participation in planning school building project gives the entire community the confidence that the contractors will not manipulate them. | 3.13           | 0.77        | Agreed        | 3.41           | 0.83        | Agreed        |
| 8.  | Citizens' participation in planning school building project will promote inclusion in decision making.   | 2.80           | 0.08        | Agreed        | 3.75           | 1.03        | Agreed        |
|     | <b>Grand mean</b>  | <b>3.02</b>    | <b>0.67</b> | <b>Agreed</b> | <b>3.11</b>    | <b>0.70</b> | <b>Agreed</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.1 above for research question one showed the mean responses of leaders and members of community based organizations in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. Item 1 had mean scores of 3.13 and 3.19, standard deviation of 0.66 and 0.69. Item 2 had mean scores of 3.05 and 3.10, standard deviation of 0.53 and 0.71. Item 3 had mean scores of 3.08 and 2.59, standard deviation of 0.87 and 0.66. Item 4 had mean scores of 2.68 and 3.01, standard deviation of 0.51 and 0.52. Item 5 had mean scores of 3.20 and 3.11, standard deviation of 0.70 and 0.65. Item 6 had mean scores of 2.29 and 2.74. standard deviation of 0.54 and 0.54. Item 7 had mean scores of 3.13 and 3.41, standard

deviation of 0.77 and 0.83. Item 8 had mean scores of 2.98 and 3.75, standard deviation of 0.80 and 1.03. With grand means of 3.02 and 3.11 which are greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, it was evident that both leaders and members of community based organizations agreed that items 1 -8 are ways citizens’ participation in school building projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State.

*Research Question 2:* In what ways does citizens’ participation in monitoring and evaluation of rural road projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 4.2: Mean Responses on the Ways Citizens’ Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Road Projects Influence Community Development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. N = 410

| S/N               | Items   | Leaders N = 40 |             |               | Members N= 370 |             |         |
|-------------------|---|----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|---------|
|                   |   | $\bar{x}$      | SD          | Remarks       | $\bar{x}$      | SD          | Remarks |
| 9.                | Citizens’ participation in monitoring and evaluation of rural road construction can promote quality road project.                               | 2.55           | 0.50        | Agreed        | 3.01           | 0.72        | Agreed  |
| 10.               | Citizens’ participation in monitoring rural road project can sustain trust.   | 3.09           | 0.73        | Agreed        | 2.53           | 0.51        | Agreed  |
| 11.               | Citizens’ participation in monitoring rural road construction promotes cordial relationship between the contractor community members.           | 2.73           | 0.62        | Agreed        | 3.44           | 0.92        | Agreed  |
| 12.               | When citizens participate in monitoring of rural road project, they help the contractors to know the bad zones or areas during raining seasons. | 3.71           | 1.04        | Agreed        | 2.66           | 0.54        | Agreed  |
| 13.               | Citizens’ participation in monitoring road construction makes them properly own the road.   | 3.20           | 0.79        | Agreed        | 3.00           | 0.68        | Agreed  |
| <b>Grand mean</b> |   | <b>3.20</b>    | <b>0.67</b> | <b>Agreed</b> | <b>3.00</b>    | <b>0.70</b> |         |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4.2 above for research question two showed the mean responses of leaders and members of community based organizations in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. Item 9 had mean scores of 2.55 and 3.01. standard deviation of 0.50 and 0.72. Item 10 had mean scores of 3.09 and 2.53, standard deviation of 0.73 and 0.51. Item 11 had means scores of 3.71 and 2.66, standard deviation of 1.04 and 2.66. Item 13 had mean scores of 3.20 and 3.00, and standard deviation of 0.79 and 0.68. With grand means of 3.20 and 3.00 which are greater than the criterion mean, it was evident

that both leaders and members of community-based organizations agreed that items 9 – 13 are ways citizens’ participation in monitoring and evaluation of rural road projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State.

*Hypothesis 1:* There is no significant difference in the mean responses of leaders and members of community-based organizations on ways citizens’ participation in planning school building projects influences community development in Bonny Local government Area of Rivers State.

Table 4.4 Z-test Analysis of Difference in the Mean Responses of Leaders and Members on Ways Citizens’ Participation in Planning School Building Projects Influence Community Development in Bonny Local Government Area, Rivers State.

| Respondents | N   | $\bar{x}$ | SD   | DF  | LS   | Z-Cal | Z-crit | Decision        |
|-------------|-----|-----------|------|-----|------|-------|--------|-----------------|
| Leaders     | 40  | 3.03      | 0.67 | 408 | 0.05 | -0.72 | ± 1.96 | H <sub>01</sub> |
| Members     | 370 | 3.11      | 0.70 |     |      |       |        | Accepted        |

Note: DF = Degree of Freedom; LS: Level of Significance.

Table 4.4 showed a summary of mean, standard deviation and z-test analysis of difference in the mean responses of leaders

and members on ways citizens’ participation in planning school building projects influences community development



in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. the z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypothesis stood at -0.72 while the critical z-value stood at  $\pm 1.96$ , using degree of freedom of 408 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated z-value is less than the critical z-value, the researcher therefore, accepted the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean responses of leaders and members of community-based organizations on ways citizens' participation in planning school building projects influences community development in Bonny local Government Area of Rivers State.

#### IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the findings in research question one revealed that citizens' participation in school building project influences community development in Bonny Local Government Area. It reduces substandard project execution, promotes unity, enables community members setup their own workshop, and promote inclusion in decision making process. This finding is supported by the findings of a study carried out by Ojuah (2012) who posited that community development itself is filled with lots of benefits. It is only when citizens come together that they can tap those benefits. The main purpose of community development is to de-emphasize regurgitate reliance on government to bring development to communities. Furthermore, Ajay & Oni as cited in Oyebamiji & Adekola (2008), averred that organization is a collection of human beings with a common goal. It is a network of relationship among individuals and activities. It involves a process of executive function aimed at ensuring that resources, activities and authority are so coordinated to achieve prescribed goals.

The result of the findings in research question two showed that citizens' participation in road construction influences community development in Bonny Local Government Area. It promotes quality road project, sustains trust, and promotes cordial relationship between the contractors and the community. This finding is supported by the findings of the US Department of Labour and Education (2013), the word sustainability means a continuation of the strategic plan, principles, and efforts to achieve the desired results. While many developers may believe that the development of the project involved finding equipment that can be continued after the development period, to ensure that long-term sustainability and circumstances of the country, as well as personnel and industry need. Consequently, Barikor (2003) perceives community development as an integrated process by which the efforts of the citizens (i.e., the rural system) are united with those of governmental authorities and voluntary agencies to improve the social, economic, and cultural conditions of the community, the very index of development posture of the nation.

The findings of the study in Table 4.3 revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of leaders and members of community-based organizations on the ways

citizens' participation in planning school building projects influence community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State. The lack of significant difference in the leaders and members' mean responses are attributable to the absence of contradictions of leaders' and members' vision and attitude.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Based on the analyzed data, it is therefore concluded that the participation of citizens in community development such as school buildings, road construction and rural market construction influences community development in Bonny Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Citizen participation in community development promotes unity among community members, ensures good quality projects, and promotes accountability, sense of ownership and sustainability of community development projects.

#### VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government and Development Agencies engaged in building of schools in rural communities should engage citizens actively in the projects as this will build their capacities and confidence to engage in other community development programmes/projects themselves.
2. Citizens should through community based organizations initiate and carry out road constructions with the support of local, state government or other development partners.
3. Local governments who are constitutionally saddled with the responsibility of constructing rural markets should ensure that they involve community members from the need assessment to implementation and evaluation stages of the project.

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