

# Imperativeness of Stakeholder's Collaboration For Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Lack of sustainable rural development in rural communities of Nigeria has been blamed on lack of support from the government and other development agencies which has placed rural communities in a deplorable state. A cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study where a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 400 sampled population size. The communities were sampled using simple random sampling while systematic random sampling was used to determine the number of respondents from each community. From the findings, the rural people identified leadership development skills, enhanced community participation in rural projects, capacity building and initiating effective conflict control mechanism in rural areas as areas they need assistance from the government and other development agencies. It has been concluded that it is imperative to promote grass root development and to improve the lives of rural dwellers through the collaboration of both the rural people and stakeholders in the development process. This will promote inclusive governance and confer ownership rights over rural development policies on rural dwellers. The paper recommends, among others, the need for government and development partners to focus their support on what the rural people identified as their development oriented needs.

**Key words:** Collaboration, community participation, stakeholders, sustainability and rural development

## Introduction

Rural communities of Nigeria are characterized by poor maintenance of existing basic infrastructures, exploitation of natural resources, poor environmental management and sanitary conditions and exertion of pressure on scarce resources due to population growth. The above highlighted problems are occasioned by the struggle for survival by the rural dwellers which has impacted negatively on rural environment. A situation that is occasioned by indiscriminate logging of trees for timbers, fuel wood and energy, overplowing, over cultivating and over grazing. Over the years, government of Nigeria has come up with rural oriented development programs to improve socio-economic conditions of the rural people, yet, much result has not been achieved (Country Report to the Rio+20 Summit, 2012). Even the few developmental achievement such as health care facilities, good road network and portable drinking water that were recorded have gradually deteriorated. When government at all levels (Federal, State, and Local Government), Non-governmental organizations, Community Based Organization, concern individuals and other stakeholders carry out development activities without putting measures on ground on how to sustain them, such development activities will not survive to benefit the future generation.

The continuous implementation of projects in rural communities without developing the capacity of

the rural people to manage such projects sustainably, creates a vicious circle of under-development in such areas. Gustavo and Kostas (2007) examined rural lives and noted that in the entire world, poverty has continued to be in extreme despite increasing urbanization. It has been observed also that globally today, 1.2 billion of people that are extremely poor, 75 percent live in rural areas and most of them depend on agricultural activities such as forest, fisheries and other economic activities for survival. Findings from Dercon (2009) also revealed that 76 per cent of developing world's poor live in rural areas. Macro trends report (2022) notes that the current population of Nigeria in 2022 is 216, 746, 934 people with 2.53 % increase from 2021. World Bank Indicator (2022) indicates that rural population in Nigeria is 90, 033580. This population figure is an indication that attention is needed regarding the needs of the growing population. In affirmation, Kanthari (2018) observed that a lot of people in rural areas live in extreme poverty. This is notwithstanding the abundance of resources in the country. In the bid to improve rural communities in Nigeria, directive approach of development which does not give room for citizens' participation was the common model used by successive government for rural development. This is a situation where government or an agency decides for the people of a community what it thinks they need or ought to value. The people are not consulted and their feelings are not considered. This is because of the common belief that there is mass illiteracy, lack of resources, and their poor receptiveness to change. Ering (2006) has observed that rural areas in Nigeria have suffered from under-development since independence. Despite several attempts by the government and other development institutions towards improving the rural areas, a wide gap still exists between policy formulation, implementation and the reality of the level of development on ground

To address sustainable development in rural communities of Nigeria, there is a need for collaborative effort from the various stakeholders. Stakeholders could be the government at all levels: (Federal government, the State government and the local government), Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Grass Root Associations and other development partners. Collaboration is a fundamental aspect of a social process towards social action. It involves the synergy between different stakeholders coming together to initiate ideas and social strategies to implement projects that improves the conditions of rural people. Singer (2017) has noted that collaboration is said to have been demonstrated when a group of people adopt a strategy to achieve their goals. The failure of most projects in rural areas sometimes has been blamed on lack of collaboration between rural dwellers, development partners and other stakeholders. Egbe (2014) has drawn attention to the fact that states and local government areas in Nigeria were created to foster grassroots development. When the efforts of the rural dwellers are being complimented by the efforts of other stakeholders, they will be able to confront challenging issues in their communities. Some of these stakeholders include; World Bank, African Development Bank, World Health Organization, United Nation International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), European Union (EU), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the government.

On the above note, this study therefore investigated the causal link between sustainable rural development and the imperative of stakeholder collaboration in Obudu Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are (I) to explore the motivational factors as measures for sustainable rural development in Nigeria, (II) to ascertain the relationship between existing rural development activities and stakeholders' collaboration and (III) to identify factors associated with rural under-development in Nigeria. The study is therefore designed to provide answers for the following research questions:

1. What are the motivational factors as measures for sustainable rural development in Obudu Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. How does existing development activities relate to stakeholder collaboration in Obudu Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria?
3. Are there factors associated with rural-development in rural communities in Obudu Local

Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria?

## Review of related literature

**Rural development:** Rural development in the world generally and in the Third World in particular has assumed the front-burner status since early eighties because governments have realized that except given the seriousness it deserves, and closing the gap between theory and practice in this area, the goals of achieving accelerated national development especially at the rural level which is the grassroots base, will remain elusive at least in the third world (Ocheni and Nwankwo, 2012). The major reason for the above assertion is predicated on the fact that majority of Nigerian population resides in rural communities. Development at this level of rural communities constitutes grass root development which when properly handled, will bring about accelerated national development. Rural development can be explained from two historical epochs. That is, the colonial and the post-colonial eras. The colonial era of rural development was a period where community development was enforced to produce products for European industries. As described by Agbokwe and Ajala (1995), the earliest attempt at rural development during the colonial era took the form of community development, and later agricultural extension. The community development approach emphasized self-help to improve health, nutrition and community welfare, whereas the agricultural extension approach was concerned with improving the agricultural productivity. The goal of both programmes ultimately was to produce primary products for the feeding of European industries.

Rural development during the post-colonial era was a kind of government intervention to transform rural areas. And also improve export commodity earnings (Igbokwe and Ajala, 1995). This was the period government's effort was focused on helping farmers in Nigeria to sell their produce at world market to their advantage. One of the ways this was achieved was through the institution of Marketing and Commodity Board. Although the strategy did not yield much result due to sharp corrupt practices of officials in charge of regulating the board, it was observed that farmers were grossly underpaid and levies and taxes deducted from them to cushion the effects of price fall were diverted to other projects that did not have any impact on the farmers. This can be seen from the prestigious cocoa house at Ibadan. This exploitative attitude of urban elites has discouraged farmer from engaging in agricultural practice there by living the rural communities with the consequences of hunger and pervasive poverty.

Nigeria has a very large rural population of about 75%. It is therefore necessary to develop such an area considering the number of people that lives there. Nnadozie (2007) summed this up by saying that, rural areas can only boast of 10% of the infrastructure and other indices of development. Yet, the urban dwellers still have their roots in the rural areas and many of them leave their families in the villages and constantly visit them there. This shows that rural culture still has influence on the urban culture/area and vice-versa. Moreover, much of the nation's wealth, especially food is produced by the rural people to feed those in the urban areas. Findings have also revealed that agricultural products from the rural economy between 1960 and 1970 contributed close to 60% of GDP on average (Ekanem, 1972), therefore, there is a need for the promotion of Agricultural development and management of natural resources in the value chain approach to achieve sustainable food security, enhance income of rural farmers, and to reduce poverty among them (Grow Africa, 2017). Furthermore, most industries in the cities get their raw materials such as lime stones, cash crops, logs of wood, cotton and cocoa among others from rural areas and yet rural areas have remained undeveloped and poverty stricken. Despite all these contributions of rural areas to national development, Giddens and Sutton (2013) described the challenge of exclusion to be larger in the countryside than in the cities.

**Sustainable development:** Sustainable development originated from the United Nations Declaration of 2015 with a focus on three main areas: the economy, poverty, and environment. Sustainable Development which emerged out of the crucibles of Millennium Development Goals detailed 17 goals and 169 targets to

be successfully implemented by member countries of United Nations, particularly the developing countries over a period of 15 years (2015-2030) (United Nation Development Programme, 2018). The 17 goals include; no poverty, zero hunger, affordable and clean energy, quality education, gender equality, climate action among others. At this point, it is pertinent to address the issue of sustainable rural development.

When rural environment, resources and existing infrastructure are being managed to benefit the present and the future generation of the rural dwellers, this can be termed sustainable rural development. In support of this, Salomonsen and Diachok (2015) have explained that maintenance of rural infrastructure through community driven development will enhance rural infrastructural sustainability. It can be deduced from this view that community people are not only to be trained on how to improve rural environment and their socio-economic wellbeing rather, on how to also sustain any project that has been established in their locality.

Sustainable development can also be referring to as the efficient utilization of resources without compromising the future generation (United Nation, 2016). It is in line with this that the economic, social and environment pillars of sustainable development have adequately states that the Federal Republic of Nigeria is “a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice”. The constitution also promises to all Nigerian citizens’ justice encompassing the social, economic, political, equality of status opportunity and the dignity of the individual, with particular emphasis on the environmental pillar of sustainable development, Article 20 (sub-section 2), of the constitution states that, “the state shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air, and land, forest and wild life of Nigeria” (Country Report to the Rio+20 Summit, 2012).

To achieve sustainable rural development in Nigeria require creating consisting demand for good governance to address conflicts, political marginalization, deforestation, climate change, sustainable livelihood, employment opportunities, inequalities, poverty and other social issues affecting rural dwellers.

**Stakeholders collaboration and development activities:** The adoption of collaborative development strategy is to enable the government create a platform for material, expert advice and financial support from private organizations, NGOs, donor agencies/development partners, communities, government of other nations for it citizens to have access to social services such as provision of food, health care, education and security. World Bank Annual Report (2016) has argued that when given clear and transparent rules, access to information, appropriate capacity and financial support, poor men and women can effectively organize themselves to identify community priorities and address local problems by working together with local governments and other supportive institutions. The concept of collaboration as explained by Himmelman (1992), is a relationship in which each organization wants to help its partners become the best that they can be. In collaborative relationships, people begin to see one another as partners rather than competitors. He further explained that when people collaborate, they have to share risks, responsibilities, and rewards. The concern for the involvement of stakeholders in rural development is to ensure that the goals of enhancing rural lives economically, politically and socially are achieved and the living conditions of the rural populace are raised to appreciable standard.

Collaborative approach of development is a collective effort that allows involvement of more stake holders in the development process where critical decisions can be taken, funding of projects will be eminent, and development goals can be realized.

When rural-oriented development needs are identified, it will be easier for stakeholders to know the areas they can assist the rural dwellers towards enhancing their lives (Aliy, 1999). Economic Innovation Group (2017) has noted that rural areas vary in certain degrees of needs and peculiarities. Thus, the gap between urban settlers and rural dwellers will continue to widen. In order to narrow the development gap that exists between the urban and the rural areas, Savage, Brume, Hovis, Spencer, Dinan and Erin (2018)



acknowledged that several rural communities in Nigeria have brought together different stakeholders, including organizations, business, government representatives and local residents, to build a plan for action.

Hann, Minna, Pekka, Liisa, Klas and Auli (2019) have argued that collaboration in education brings about wealth of information and technologies that will enhance effective pedagogical teaching methods and learning. This is based on the fact that most schools in rural areas lack teaching aids and education technologies. But through collaboration, government, Non-Government Organization (NGOs) and development partners can donate such technological equipment and teaching aids to support the schools. From this support, learning of pupils and students will be enhanced. Government can also provide training for the teachers and other authorities of the rural schools to encourage them to use ICT for both academic and administrative purposes.

To buttress the fact that rural schools in Nigeria lack educational facilities, Akanbi and Akanbi, (2012) have noted that digital divide exists between urban, semi-urban, and rural schools as a result of varied challenges that rural communities face. Some of these educational technologies that could improve learning outcome of students in rural schools are: Talking books, audio books, electronic books, and online text (Holum and Gahala, 2001). lack of collaboration between government and rural people has been seen as a factor responsible for rural under development (Makofane and Gray, 2007). When rural people are educated and provided with the necessary skills, their desires to improve their communities and their lives will increase.

In addressing the role (s) of stakeholders in rural development, Dokpesi and Ibiezugbe (2010) have commented that when community members are allowed to collaborate with development partners during development process, it will enhance grass root input in the development strategies in which the ordinary people in the village are involved in the decisions that directly affect their lives. By implication it can be summarized that collaboration gives room for community participation. In line with this, Ering (2006) notes that participatory model emphasizes the role of benefiting communities as actors in deciding their needs and how they should be met. Combined social energies of NGOs, CBOs, National government institutions, communities and other development facilitators towards community mobilization, project implementation project sustainability and financial support aim are encouraging community participation. In affirmation, USAID sponsors extensive public health interventions targeting HIV/AIDS in Sub-Sahara Africa. The Centre of African Family Studies and African institution strengthened the capacities of organizations and individuals working in the field of reproductive health. (CAFS Report, 2014).

**Motivational measures to encourage sustainable development:** In order to surmount those factors that hinder development activities in rural communities in order to promote sustainable development, there are wide ranges of factors to motivate people to participate in rural development projects. There are residents and the outsiders who are keen in making positive impacts on the disadvantaged rural dwellers (Makofane and Gray, 2007). In line with this, both the residents of rural areas and outsiders constitute the stakeholder. When a coalition is built among stakeholders, resources and leadership skills will be shared. Community toolbox (2015) argued that cooperation among the stakeholders requires more trust and a greater investment in time. Building collaboration require the coming together, growing together and staying together of the stakeholders (Savage *et al.*, 2018). This can be achieved by understanding leadership roles and working to perform them, aspiring to improve oneself for the good of the collaboration and for improvement and better outcomes from the collaborative efforts. The study of Glenn (2009) further identified four stages of building stakeholder collaboration towards a sustainable rural development. The stages include: Identification of problems, motivating and mobilizing people and resources, working together and creating an enabling environment for development to strive.

The collaboration of development partners with rural dwellers to forestall social energies and financial resources is not an easy one. This is based on the fact that the dynamics of the behavior of rural people need to be understood. Cultural diversities, wrong perception of rural projects, fear that the partners

are coming to take their land, technology shyness, and several other factors. It is therefore necessary that what constitute a collaboration needs to be defined clearly. Shannon (2014) has suggested that in any collaboration, the names of the stakeholders, their interest, resources availability, level of interest, types of stakeholders, position of the stakeholders in the group and preferred form of communication must be identified. The essence of this is to build a united development group for plan action. In support of this, McComb, Boyd and Boluk (2016) have argued that the implementation of stakeholder collaboration can only be sustained if the group members continue to build trust among themselves.

The assessment of the needs of the rural people is sacrosanct to guiding government and development partners in identifying areas of development priority in the rural area. Findings from Nielsen and Chanhsoiphou (2006) have shown that many rural youths expressed a desire to continue their academic studies at secondary and university levels while others were interested in acquiring vocational skills. The study of Mus (2010) also suggested a preference for the development of markets infrastructure where rural dwellers can get honest returns on their products. Additionally, the study conducted by Adenipekun (2013) has indicated that agricultural practice in rural communities is very low and at subsistence level. One of the factors hindering rural farmers from upgrading to mechanized farming is the lack of funds. This could be a good area to give support to rural farmers to increase their rural economy. This points to the fact that every rural area has its peculiar development oriented needs especially those ones that have not witnessed much development activities, or those ones that have suffered lopsided development through the top-down approach by the government. This has continued to persist due to the over bearing influence of the State Government over the Local Government by not allowing them the full autonomy to judiciously utilize resources to trigger grass root development. United Nations (1982) has argued that any development that does not reach the common man or encourage equitable distribution of goods and services cannot promote the general well-being of the people and as such, should not be regarded as development. The implication of this is that development programmes must be people-oriented and must be tailored towards the needs and the aspirations of the people. When rural people are given the needed support, they will develop an enduring capacity to sustain rural initiative.

**Factors that affects rural development:** One of the factors responsible for rural under-development is lack of community participation inline with this, Ewelum and Mbara (2015) maintained that problems that militate against the involvement of people in rural development are lack of funds, poor planning and implementation. This further corroborate the findings of Abiona (2009) who maintained that lack of funds makes community efforts towards self-help programmes not to be feasible. Deducing from here, it is obvious that the level of community involvement in the development can be undermined by many factors such as improper accountability, lack of trust, lack of leadership skills, illiteracy, lack of fund, poor mobilization and conflict.

### **Theoretical framework**

Structural functionalism and Stakeholder model are adopted as theoretical framework for this study. The justification for combining the theories is to assist in explaining all the objectives of the study thus, providing sound theoretical underpinning for the study. Structural functionalism has the following as its major proponents: Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), Auguste Comte (1798-1859), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). The theory looks at society from the perspective of social system that is made up of various social institutions or subsystems functioning together for a better outcome. It views the society as a complex whole made up of parts that are separate but inter-dependent or interlocking (Idiorough, 2002). Structural Functionalism is one of the most popular sociological theories that have stood the test of time in the analysis of social phenomenon (Charles, 2005). Radcliffe- Brown (1976) argued that functionalism as it relates to human societies is centered on the analogy of social lives and organic life. He views the roles of the functions of social institution as having a link between it and the needs of social

organism. The model is used to describe how social organization works. Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) produced a general theoretical system that came to be called structural functionalism for the analysis of the society. Spencer drew an analogy between societies and living organisms; an organism is made up of many specialized parts (the brain, the heart, the lungs, kidney, liver and the spleen). Each part has a particular function which it contributes to the maintenance of the whole organism. The lungs, for example, extract oxygen from the air and deposit it in the blood and the heart pumps the blood through the body. These parts are interdependent, each needs the others for survival and or for effective functionality. For the organism to survive, they must work in harmony with one another, so it is with rural communities in Nigeria. Bassis, Gelles and Levine (1991) explained that each society is composed of many specialized structures (family, religion, politics, the education system, and health). These specialized structures have specific functions in developing the lives of rural dwellers to grow up and become responsible citizens in the society.

The functionalists stressed the delicate balance among different social structures. Because these structures are interdependent, change in one area of social life inevitably causes adjustments in other areas. For example, a positive change in the economic situation of the community members may lead to improved standard of living. At the same time, the dysfunctionality of the economy and other structures may bring poverty, unemployment, hunger, diseases and other social problems. This perspective is interested in the functions that different structures of the society (communities) serve and their connectedness to sustain the whole. Functionalism brings about adaptation, goal attainment, pattern maintenance, and integration of a social system (Parson, 1949). Adaptation deals with ability of a social system exercising some degree of control over its environment. The rural communities are structured to continually provide basic needs or services for their people through self-help. These needs could be in the form of creation of awareness on the need for community participation in rural development, environmental sanitation, organized campaigns against health-related problems such as HIV, Lassa fever, virginal fistula, and development of infrastructural facilities such as classroom blocks, pipe borne water, community health centers and viewing centers.

Stakeholder model was propounded by Byrd (2007). The emphasis of the theory is in the role played by the stakeholder towards development. The theory explains that for development to be achieved, there is a need for partnership from various individuals, community members, philanthropist, government, agencies, international organizations and financial institutions. The assumptions of the theory are that through collaboration, planning for rural development will be effective. Also, the community members will be supported financially to embark on community initiatives, which will motivate them to ensure that local enterprises are protected and sustained.

## Methods/Material

### Research Design

A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted as the appropriate design for this study. This is because it gave the respondents an opportunity to give their opinion regarding stakeholder collaboration and under-development in their communities.

### Population Size, Sample size and Sampling Techniques

The projected population of the study area (Obudu LGA) is 245,900 from 2006-2022. To determine the sample size, formula by Taro Yamane (1967) was used.

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$n$  = Sample size

$e$  = Margins of error at 5% (0.05)

$1$  = Constant

$N$  = population Size

$$n = 245,900/1 + 245900 (.05)^2$$

$$n = 245900/1 + 245900 \times 0.0025$$

$$n = 245900/1 + 614.75$$

$$= 245900/615.75$$

$$n = 399.35 \sim 400$$

The 400 respondents were selected from the four sampled communities within Obudu Local Government area of Cross River State, Nigeria using simple random sampling while a systematic random sampling technique was used to draw the number of households from each community that were used. From the systematic sampling that was conducted, the following households were selected based on the population of each of the community for equal representation. They sampled households are Ohong 110, Kakum 95, Bebuawan 93, and Bedia 102. The head of every household was picked for the questionnaire to be administered to. A house without occupants were replaced with the next house with occupants. The study was carried out in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria where four communities were selected for the study using simple random sampling technique. The communities include Ohong, Kakum, Bebuawan, and Bedia. Obudu Local Government area is bounded to the North by Vandikia Local Government Area of Benue State, to the East by Obanliku Local Government Area of Cross River State, to the South by Boki Local Government and to the West by Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. It has an area of 300.44 square Km and the major languages are Bette and Utugwang languages. These communities were chosen for this study because they have witnessed relative community development activities through self-help initiative over the years.

### **Instrument of data collection**

The instrument adopted for this study is a structured questionnaire. This method is a primary source of data collection which afforded the researcher an opportunity to gather face hand information. The contents of the questionnaire include the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the motivational measures for sustainable rural development in Nigeria (6 items), rural development activities and stakeholder's involvement (11 items) and the factors associated with rural under-development in Nigeria (6 items). The items in the questionnaire were measured using 5 points Likert scale while some were dichotomously scored with YES, NO and UNDECIDED options. To ensure the instrument captures the data it was designed to achieve, content validity was adopted where the instrument was given to two scholars to validate its contents. After which items that were not necessary in the instrument were expunged and the necessary corrections were effected. In the other hand, a pilot survey was used to test the reliability of the instrument. The pilot test was conducted on 20 respondents and a correlation reliability calculation was computed leading to the reliability coefficient of 0.85 which shows that the instrument was reliable enough to be used.

After this, the instrument was used to collect data. Before the administration of the instrument, the researchers did not engage the services of Research Assistants because the co-authors were familiar with the



study area and the language of the people. This alone, had removed the communication barrier.

### Data Analysis

Predictive Analytic Statistical Software (PASW) was used to code and analyzed the data that were collected. 400 copies of questionnaire were administered, only 389 were valid while 11 were invalid due to improper filling by the respondents. The information was presented in descriptive form using simple percentage counts and tables. The data gathered were analyzed using regression statistical model and chi-square statistics. Regression was chosen to analyzed multiple independent variables to ascertain their impact on collaboration and sustainable rural development in Obudu Local Government, Cross River State, Nigeria while the chi-square statistics was used to determine the degree of association between existing rural development activities and stakeholders’ involvement

### Ethical consideration/Consent approval

Before this study was being carried out, the researchers submitted a research proposal to one University in Nigeria seeking for approval to carry out the study. The Committee on Ethics and Research after much scrutiny, gave approval for the study to be conducted, since the study does not have any threats or harm on the respondents. Also, the consent of the respondents in the various communities where this study took place were sought for through their community heads. Each questionnaire contains a letter explaining the aims of the study and also to afford the respondents the opportunity to voluntary give their consent to participate in the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Data presentation and results

Table1: Multiple regression analysis of motivational measures for sustainable rural development in Nigeria

Explanatory Variables	Unit of Measurement	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P value
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	Respondent’s responses	4.118	.154		26.738	.000***
Leadership development among Rural dwellers	1= Agree (144=37%)					
	2= Strongly agree (132=39.9%)					
	3= Disagree (73=18.8%)	-.444	.093	-.534	-4.754	.000***
	4= Strongly disagree (29=7.2%)					
	5= Undecided (12=3.1%)					

Enhanced community participation in rural development projects	1= Agree (130=33.4%) 2= Strongly agree (132=39.9%) 3= Disagree (88=22.6%) 4= Strongly disagree (28=7.2%) 5= Undecided (11=2.8%)	.389	.130	.490	2.996	.003***
Build capacity among rural dwellers	1= Agree = (139=35.7%) 2= Strongly agree (137=35.2%) 3= Disagree (85=21.9%) 4= Strongly disagree (17=4.4%) 5= Undecided(11=2.8%)	-.848	.112	-1.056	-7.559	.000***
Carryout enlightenment campaign to eradicate cultural barriers	1= Agree = (135=35.7%) 2= Strongly agree (147=37.8%) 3= Disagree (46=11.8%) 4= Strongly disagree (46=11.8%) 5= Undecided(15=3.9%)	.126	.082	.141	1.542	.124 <sup>NS</sup>
Initiate effective CCM	1= Agree (172=44.2%) 2= Strongly agree (132=33.9%) 3= Disagree (45=11.6%) 4= Strongly disagree (28=7.2%) 5= Undecided(12=3.1%)	.554	.137	.584	4.032	.000***

Provision of Basic needs	1= Agree (174=44.7%)	-.092	.114	-.089	-.804	.422 <sup>NS</sup>
	2= Strongly agree (144=37%)					
	3= Disagree (31=8%)					
	4= Strongly disagree (28=7.2%)					
	5= Undecided (12=3.1%)					

\*\*\* significant at 0.05, \*\* significant at 0.01 and \* significant at 0.1; NS= not significant; R= .536; R-Square.287; Df= 6, 382 & CCM = conflict control mechanism

The result in table 1 shows that leadership development among rural dwellers is a significant factor for sustainable rural development. The P value of 0.000 < 0.05 suggest leadership development a highly significant motivational factor with the coefficient value of -.534 which signifies a negative correlation. The analysis also indicates that enhanced community participation in rural development projects is significant with the p value of 0.003>0.05 significant level. The result shows a positive correlation with the coefficient of .490. Building the capacity of rural people is significantly related to sustainable rural development with the p value of 0.000 < 0.05 significant level which indicates a negative correlation with the coefficient of -1.056. The p value of .124 > 0.05 significant level suggest that carrying out of enlightenment campaign to eradicate cultural barriers is not significantly correlated. Initiate effective conflict control mechanism records the p value 0.000 < 0.05 significant level suggest a positive significant correlation with the coefficient of .584. Deducing from the p value .422 > 0.05 significant level, provision of basis needs for rural people is not significant. The R value is.536 while R-Square is .287. The explanatory power of .289 implies that the independent variables that are significant will contribute 28.9 per cent to sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

**Table 2: Chi-square association of existing rural development activities and stakeholders’ involvement**

Existing development activities	N	%	Stakeholder collaboration					Total
			A	SA	D	SD	U	
Community security	5	1.3	–	–	5	–	–	5
Agricultural practice	7	1.8	–	7	–	–	–	7
Adult literacy training	12	3.1	–	12	–	–	–	12
Health Advocacy	13	3.3	–	13	–	–	–	13
Resilience to Climate change	20	5.1	–	20	–	–	–	20
Sanitary and environmental management	18	4.6	–	17	–	1	–	18
Portable water (Boreholes)	36	9.3	–	36	–	–	–	36
Viewing centres	51	13.1	18	33	–	–	–	51
Skill acquisitions	65	16.7	65	0	–	–	–	65
Class room block	91	23.4	26	0	25	30	10	91
Free medical treatment	71	18.3	30	36	–	5	–	71
Total			139	174	30	36	10	389

A stands for Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, D = Disagree, SD= Strongly disagree and U= undecided. Degree

of freedom (DF) = 1,  $X^2 = 36.502$ , P value is .000 and the significance level is 0.05. H0: there is no association between existing development activities and stakeholders' involvement.

The result in table 2 indicates that there is a significant association between the existing development activities and the involvement of stakeholders in rural communities of Nigeria. The decision is based on the chi-square value of 36.502 with the DF of 1 and the p value of .000. Since the p value of .000 < 0.05 significance level, we therefore fail to accept the Ho and rather accept the H1 which states that there is a significant association between existing development activities and stakeholders' involvement.

**Research question three:** What are the factors associated with rural under-development in Nigeria?

**Table 3: Multiple regression analysis of factors associated with rural under- development in Nigeria**

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages	B	S. E	Beta	Sig
(Constant)			.037		.029	.192
Conflict of interest	No 73	18.8	1.11		.035	.000
	Yes 316	81.2				
Disagreement	No 61	15.7	-1.65		.064	.000
	Yes 328	84.3				
Embezzlement	No 71	18.3	-6.39		.038	.000
	Yes 318	81.7				
Lack of fund	No 17	4.4	.719		.036	.521
	Yes 372	95.6				
Imposition of Projects	No 39	10	-.634		.039	-.674
	Yes 350	90				
Interference of politicians	No 53	13.6	.877		.052	1.065
	Yes 336	86.4				
F-Value			(D1 and D2) = 6, 382			
R- Square Value			.831			
Adjusted R-Square			.828			
R			.911			
a. Dependent Variable: Stakeholder collaboration						

B stand for unstandardized coefficient, SE stand for standard Error, Beta stand for standard coefficient while sig stand for significant values. Regression model is significant at 0.05 level. N =389, N stand for the study population

The result in table 3 reveals that lack of fund, imposition of project by the government and interferences are

variables that showed significant correlation with rural under-development in Nigeria. The showed a greater explanatory power, registering  $R^2$  of 83.1 per cent. The three variables are significant at P value of  $.000 < .05$  significant level while conflict of interest, disagreement and embezzlement did not show any significant correlation.

## Discussion of findings

The findings in table 1 shows that leadership development, enhanced community participation in rural development projects, building the capacity of rural people, initiating an effective conflict control mechanism have been identified as motivational measures for sustainable rural development in rural communities of Nigeria. Previous studies identified poor leadership skills, lack of managerial know how, illiteracy, ignorance, lack of accountability, embezzlement, selfishness of the leaders and poor planning as factors that impeded rural development. To corroborate this findings, Abiona (2009) observes that lack of funds makes community efforts towards self-help programmes not to be feasible. When community members have opportunity to participate in development activities that involves other stake holders, they would have opportunity to develop leadership skills, and mobilize resources to improve their environment, share ideas with other stakeholders that are involved, and become self- fulfilled. Tinio (2003) commented on the information need for effective planning and decision making regarding rural initiatives. As a follow up, Social Watch (1996) and Fernando (2017) explained that more than 90 percent of Africa's population could greatly benefit from information on better choice of food, safe water and basic nutrition, child care, family planning, immunization, prevention and control of endemic diseases. These findings were further supported by Yahaya (2008) who posits that the greatest area of information needs by rural Nigerians is in agriculture. In affirming the essentiality of information needs of the rural communities, Ottong and Bassey (2009) explained that community mobilization increases awareness and improves understanding among community members. Community mobilization involves the presentation of well-prepared information, education and communication. This is a veritable process of public enlightenment which heightens the level of knowledge of societal issues. Despite the arguments from various scholars to adopt a bottom –top development approach when it comes to rural development project there is still a need for support from external development agencies (Narayan, 1995).

In the bid to investigate the nexus between rural development activities and stakeholders involvement, it has been revealed in table 2 that the following development activities in Obudu Local Area: Community security, agricultural practice, adult literacy training, health advocacy, resilience to climate change, sanitary and environmental management, portable water, viewing centres, skills acquisition training, building of class room block and free medical treatment are associated with stakeholder's involvement. This was determined by the chi-square value of 36.502 with the degree of freedom of 1 at the significance value of 0.05. From the percentage ranking, on the following development activities have appreciable level of stakeholders' involvement. They include: class room block, free medical treatment, skill acquisitions, viewing center and portable water. These findings are consistent with the view of Huberman, Med, Tom, and Davis (2014) who observed that community partners implement community action plan by pooling and leveraging resources, including skills, funds, and other assets.

The result in table 3 reveals that lack of fund, imposition of project by the government and interferences from politicians are variables that showed significant correlation with rural under-development in Nigeria. The showed a greater explanatory power, registering  $R^2$  of 83.1 per cent. The three variables are significant at P value of  $.000 < .05$  significant level. Conflict of interest, disagreement and embezzlement did not show any significant relationship.

In line with this, Ewelum and Mbara (2015) maintain that problems that militate against the involvement of people in rural development are lack of funds, poor planning and implementation. These findings also corroborate the work (Brown, 1999) who argued that most rural projects have failed as the result of



mismanagement of fund, nepotism and substantial corruption. This implies that availability and proper management of fund is sacrosanct for a successful rural development project implementation. Access to fund, capacity building and project management are some of the needs identified by communities' members for assistance from development partners (Makofane and Gray, 2007). Since development itself is a social, that require actionable plans to improve the wellbeing of man, rural people need to be given the necessary support to plan and execute development initiatives. This will give them the feeling of ownership and the impetus to sustain the local development projects as opposed to imposing ideas from politicians.

## Conclusion, Policy Implications and Recommendations

### Conclusion/Policy Implications

So far, this paper addressed issues bothering on rural development and stakeholder collaboration in Nigeria. It has been observed that a lot of policies and development programmes such as Agricultural Extension Workers, National Orientation Agency (NOA), Community Development Experts and Mass Mobilization for Self-reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), Better life for Rural Women and Green Revolution have been initiated to improve rural conditions yet, much result has not been achieved. The following motivational factors that can encourage rural people into sustainable rural development activities are leadership development, enhanced community participation in rural development projects, building capacity among the rural dwellers and initiating of effective conflict control mechanism. Development activities such as establishment of class room block, free medical centers, skills acquisitions establishment of viewing centers and provision of portable water and few others were linked to the support of stakeholders. Factors that are associated with rural under development were identified to include lack of fund, imposition of projects on the rural people by the government and interferences of politicians in the development process.

For policy direction, this study has added significant value to the existing scholarship in rural development. There will be a paradigm ship in the adoption of development approach towards galvanizing the efforts of government, agencies, associations, NGOs and rural dwellers towards improving the socio-economic well-being of the rural people. A strong and formidable collaboration will create an avenue to share resources, risk, leadership skills, build trust, developing people and environment. Planning, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and in the monitoring of the projects with rural people inclusive guarantees sustainability of projects.

### Recommendations

1. Community leaders should seek for intervention from politicians, government and other development agencies such as UNDP to support them in area of agriculture, USAID to assist them in skill development, government to beep up rural security, supply of herbicides, insecticides and train rural farmers on modern farm practices to improve their yields.
2. Government at all levels in Nigeria should formulate policies and design programmes that will address factors that constitute obstacle to sustainable rural development. Some of the areas to tackle are access to fund to enable rural people carry out development activities under the supervision of the government. When this is done, imposition of ideas from government will be eliminated and inclusive development policies will be encouraged.
3. Stakeholders such as NGOs, CBOs, Diaspora groups, Religious Organisations, and others who have been assisting rural people should spread their support to cover community security, agriculture, adult literacy training, health advocacy, sanitary and environmental condition of the rural areas.

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