

Age – Grades and Community Development in Southeast Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the involvement and participation of age-grades in community development in the southeastern part of Nigeria. It is a known truism that many rural communities in southeast Nigeria just like many other rural in different parts of the country suffer massive underdevelopment as a result of successive governments' lack of interest in developing the rural areas. Even when they do, it is not usually in consultation with the local people in terms of the kind of projects and infrastructures they need most in their communities. As a result, most times you find development projects that do not have any direct impact on the lives of the people. Different communities therefore resort to self-help in bringing development to their communities and age-grades remain one of the groups that are actively involved in community development in southeast Nigeria. This study focuses on the factors that give impetus to the involvement of age-grades in community development, roles that age-grades play in community development, challenges that age-grades face as a result of their involvement in community development, and measures that can be put in place to ensure continued strong participation of age-grades in community development in southeast Nigeria. The methodology used in this work is essentially descriptive. The theoretical framework for this study is role theory (functionalist approach). The study contends that some of the factors that encourage involvement of age-grades in community development in southeast Nigeria include; sense of identity, recognition and traditional titles, political relevance, lack of development, and replication of what is in place in the cities. Some of the roles that age-grades carry out in community development include, fund raising for development projects, conception, mobilization and implementation of self-help projects, conflict resolution, assisting the less privileged, and encouraging illustrious sons and daughters to bring their investments home. Some of the challenges confronting age-grades include, religious bias, poor funding, abandoned projects, poor leadership, division and lack of unity. Based on these findings, the study recommends amongst others that government should endeavor to partner with age-grades to promote community development. Also, traditional rulers should create awareness on the positive roles of the age-grade in development.

Keywords: Age-grades, community development, self-help projects, southeast, rural communities

INTRODUCTION

An age grade is a form of social organization based on age, within a series of such categories, through which individuals are initiated (Ndubuisi, 2018; Nwachi, 2021). In traditional societies, entry into an age grade – generally gender-separated is often marked by an initial rite, which may be the crowning of a long and complex preparation, sometimes a retreat. After a period of some years, during which they often perform certain common activities, alone or under senior guidance, members may be initiated either collectively or individually into a more senior age grade (Elendu, 2022). This progression is often accompanied by the revelation of secret knowledge, collectively or restricted to a council of elders and/or position such as shaman entrusted with the preparation of initiates (Eleazu, 2020).

Community development is a process where community members are supported by agencies to identify and

take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development empowers community members and creates stronger and more connected communities (Kalu, 2018). Community development is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action (Kenny, 2007). Community development considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities, and values community knowledge and wisdom. Community development programmes are led by community members at every stage – from deciding on issues to selecting and implementing actions, and evaluation. Community development has an explicit focus on the redistribution of power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage (Nnaji, 2017; Chukwu, 2020).

There are potential outcomes at both individual and community level. Children and families directly involved in community development initiatives may benefit from increases in skills, knowledge, empowerment and self-efficacy, and experience enhanced social inclusion and community connectedness (Kenny, 2007). Through community development initiatives, community members can become more empowered, such that they can increasingly recognise and challenge conditions and structures that lead to their disempowerment or negatively impacting their wellbeing (Ife, 2016). At a community level, community development and empowerment initiatives can achieve long-term outcomes such as stronger and more cohesive communities, evidenced by changes in social capital, civic engagement, social cohesion and improved health (Campbell, Pyett and McCarthy, 2007; Ife, 2016; Kenny, 2007; Wallestein, 2006).

Age-grade system in Nigeria could be traced to the pre-colonial Nigeria that lacked informed governing body. Among the eastern section of Nigeria, it was a gerontocratic type of government where the oldest man in a given community ruled assisted by the council of elders. In the western section, while the Oba stayed at the top, and the town chiefs assisted him, the oldest male headed the clans and the sub-clans. In the northern section dominated by the Hausa/Fulani people, the Emirs and town heads ruled the people (Ijere, 2018:17).

During this same period, in traditional Nigeria societies, community development went purely on voluntary efforts of the people. There were no non-governmental bodies, age-grades played significant roles in many Nigeria communities. They saw that local institutions were not abused and that the habit of self-help was developed (Olisa, 2012). These agents of community development performed such tasks as the construction, re-construction and maintenance of inter and intra community roads, clearing of streams or water points, clearing the village square and market places. In terms of natural disaster such as flood, fire outbreak, they rebuilt the victims' houses. Since there existed many age groups in each community, an age- grade may embark on a particular project and will only involve others if its resources proved inadequate, in such cases the entire adult members of the community may be involved (Olisa, 2012; Ujemba, 2017). There are calls for serious attention to be paid to the deplorable condition in which the rural people live and work in Nigeria. It has generally been recognized that majority of Nigerian people live in rural areas. The rural areas in Nigeria are characterized by high incidence of poverty, increasing unemployment and underemployment, food shortages, diseases, ignorance, poor housing, low income, low life expectancy at birth, illiteracy and high rate of infant mortality. There are several other problems which have been compounded by the alarming rate of population growth, natural disasters and ecological problems such as drought and flood (Ugwu, 2016; Nwachi, 2021).

The geographic isolation of rural communities is a major hurdle to improving residents' employment and incomes, since public transit is not available to rural residents. The long distances also make it harder for rural residents to access health care and other critical services. And rural community developers themselves frequently work in isolation (Uchendu, 2021). Based on the foregoing, this study seeks to examine the relationship between age grades and community development in terms of the factors that encourage their participation, their specific roles and the challenges they have to grapple with as a result of their involvement in community development in southeast Nigeria. The research methodology employed in doing

this is the descriptive method.

CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Age-Grade

Age grade is an association of people of equal or about the same age bracket depending on communities, operating within a given territory or area with the aim of individual, collective and societal transformation or development (Kenny, 2007). The male and female wings of an age grade function independently but coordinate to realize assigned roles and responsibilities (Njoku, 2016). Age grade system is also defined as an organized, culturally defined social category of people with membership based on age. In some societies it is entered automatically when one reaches a certain age, while in others it is entered through an initiation rite and through payment of a fee (Ndubuisi, 2018). In sociology, an age grade is a form of social organization based on age within a series of such categories, through which individuals pass over the course of their lives (Nkata, 2015). Nnaji (2017) sees it as a group of persons of the same sex and approximately the same age having certain definite duties and privileges in common for the development of their society. The number of age grades and the terminology vary significantly between traditions

The age- grade system is an age long socio-cultural institution in Igboland, South East of Nigeria. In order to understand the age- grade system in Igboland, certain clarifications are necessary (Olisa, 2012; Orji, 2018). Contrary to a literal meaning of the term, an age- grade known as “*otu ogbo*”, “*otu ebiri*” or “*uke*” depending on the dialect of a specific area, comprises of people born within a range of years who come together to form an organization which represents not only their interests but that of the wider community (Okonta, 2015; Robertson, 2017). Therefore, it could be more appropriate to refer to age- grades as organizations made up of people within the same “age set”. Uchendu (2016) corroborates this view and states that the members of an age- grade could be those born “within a five years period which constitutes one age set, such a group is drawn from all lineages within a locality or a village”. For Nwachi (2021), the age- grade is made up of people within the same age (*ogbo*) bracket usually within three to five years from each other and it is a means to create peer group, foster unity and responsibility, acting mainly as a socio-cultural institution.

According to Uguru (2015), this means that ages of the members of one particular age grade are not usually the same. However, the members of an age grade are equal among themselves. Even though some are older than others, they treat themselves as equals. When one claims to be older than the other, he is normally advised to go to an elder age- grade otherwise he should behave himself in spite of the age differences. Age-grades organize themselves by selecting leaders who are delegated or given powers to pilot the affairs of the group (Uguru, 2015; Wallerstein, 2006; Agwu, 2016). In modern times, officers for whom votes are cast for are the chairman, the secretary, the assistant secretary, the financial secretary, the treasurer and the provost. There are modifications in these posts from one age grade to another (Azuonye, 2016; Basden, 2018).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development is a process where community members are supported by agencies to identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them (Ife, 2016). Ijere (2018) sees it as a situation where members of a particular community unite to take collective action to solve their common problems. Kalu (2018) noted that community development empowers community members and creates stronger and more connected communities. It is a holistic approach grounded in principles of empowerment, human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination and collective action. Community development considers community members to be experts in their lives and communities, and values community knowledge and

wisdom (i.e. use of local understanding to solve local problems).

According to Labonte (2019) the role of age- grades in community development ranges from small initiatives within a small group to large initiatives that involve the broader community. Ejituwu (2016) posits that age grades usually develop strategies, interventions or coordinated activities at the community level aimed at bringing about socio-political and economic development. Age- grades are agents of social change and often devise measures to improve the quality of life in their communities; they also ensure that communities collectively make better decisions about the use of resources such as infrastructure, labour and knowledge.

For the above reason, Afigbo (2017) indicated that in order to improve the role of age- grades in community development, there is need for a long-term endeavour, well-planned, inclusive, equitable, holistic and integrated efforts into the bigger picture, initiated and supported by community members to the benefit of the community. According to Agwu (2016) it is pertinent to observe that because of their crucial role and knowledge of self-help projects, age grade members if given the chance can significantly contribute to community development. For Anyanwu and Aguwa (2016), age- grades serve as easy source of labour, and therefore enhance food sufficiency in their communities and the country at large. Age- grades also help their various communities to become more responsible, organized and live healthy lifestyles through their advocacy health programmes.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives;

1. To examine the factors that facilitate the participation of age-grades in community development in Southeast, Nigeria.
2. To find out the specific roles age-grades play as a result of their participation in community development in Southeast, Nigeria.
3. To ascertain the challenges age-grades have to grapple with following their involvement in community development in Southeast, Nigeria.
4. To find out measures that could be put in place to continue to reinforce participation of age-grades in community development in Southeast, Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical thrust of this paper is the functionalist perspective on role theory. This perspective is designed to explain how individuals who occupy particular social positions are expected to behave and how they expect others to behave (Hindin, 2007). Role theory is based on the assumption that people behave predictably and that an individual's behaviour is context-specific, based on their social position or a typical behaviour. The role theory is one key element to understanding the relationship among the micro-macro and intermediate levels of the society (Biddle, 1986). Role theory is also a way of thinking about the world that focuses on the roles people play in the development of their society (Ritzer and Douglas, 2003). The primary goal of role theory is to look at how the role people play affects their interaction with others and how such interaction contributes meaningfully to community development. Each role has certain obligations to act in a specific way and a person will typically fulfil this obligation subconsciously (Biddle, 1986; Hindin, 2007).

This theory is relevant to this study because it assumes that roles are not necessarily chosen by the person who fills them. Role theorists see community development as a process where age- grades have greater assigned roles to play. The theory specifically posits that age- grades have crucial roles to play in order to bring about physical development in their localities, noting that it is important for every member of the age-

grade to engage in productive activities such as farming, trading, manufacturing etc to facilitate the creation of opportunities for the jobless and hopeless in that community. That way, residents will pay their dues to their age- grades and economic activity would speed up community development for the betterment of the society. The theory maintains that for improved and robust progress in southeast Nigeria, the role of age grades cannot be taken for granted. Nonetheless, role theory has been criticized on the ground that not every person has a role to play in community development. A case in point is mentally deranged members of the community.

Formation of Age-Grades in Southeast Nigeria

Cabaj and Weaver (2016) highlighted how age- grades are formed in Igboland. For them, an age- grade usually starts by the members deciding to come together since they have come of age. In addition, the community demands that they should start organizing themselves when their immediate senior age- grade had been named and started to pay levies (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016). Screening of members and verification of the ages of prospective members also constitute part of the preparation process. Admission of members is endless. Age- grades admit new members from time to time even when they had done their outing ceremony. The difference is that as time goes on they add to the requirements for the admission of new members. The requirements are mostly dues and levies already paid by the members. When an age- grade has taken a name and done its outing ceremony it begins to add other requirements (Ejituwu, 2016; Uchendu, 2021).

The outing or naming ceremony of an age- grade is done with pomp and pageantry (Afigbo, 2017). On the day of the naming ceremony, the new age grade that is doing its outing ceremony entertains each of the age-grades after which the sponsoring age- grade names the new age grade. This is done by the leader (chairman) of the sponsoring age grade pronouncing the chosen name that brings the occasion to an end (Campbell, Pyett and McCarthy, 2007). In naming an age- grade, the members come together well in advance to determine the name they will take. The decision on the name is considered on the basis of various episodes, issues or events in the society. From time immemorial, age grades in Igboland serve as a formal mechanism through which male and female members of each Igbo community pass through the different stages of life (Anyanwu and Aguwa, 2016).

The conduct of the members of an age -grade is regulated by its constitution (Dike and Ekejiuba, 2017; Higgins, 2018). Basically, an age- grade's constitution contains various rules and regulations that encourage conviviality, solidarity, personal and collective development, and prohibits the members from indulging in various acts of misconducts such as stealing, fighting, taking the wife of a fellow member to bed, raping and disobedience to the directives of the executive officers, non-attendance of funeral ceremonies of members or relatives etc (Kania & Kramer, 2017). When any member contravenes any of the provisions of his age grade's constitution, he/she will face trial and punished accordingly if found guilty. In some cases, the constitution makes provision for fine, suspension or termination of membership etc (Dooris and Heritage, 2017).

Factors that encourage Participation of Age grades in Community Development

One of the key functions of community development practitioner (such as age- grade) is to empower the community (Christens and Inzeo, 2015). This is done through a broad range of actions and activities that change depending on the context. Community development practitioners support community members through the provision of information needed to identify issues and plan actions. This could include sharing information on local data, good practice around identified issues and relevant programmes and measures resulting to community development (Christens and Inzeo, 2015; Basden, 2018). According to Basden (2018), the above narrative captures the ideal situation, but in reality, there are many factors such as too many age mates living outside the local community, indiscipline, sharp practices, diabolism, fetish practices among members that serve to discourage others from participating actively in the events and programmes of

their age- grades in their communities.

Scholars such as Christens and Inzeo (2015) have affirmed the resilience, legitimacy and relevance of African traditional institutions in their varieties to the socio-cultural, economic and political lives of Africans overtime even in this contemporary time; particularly in the rural areas. Dike and Ekejiuba (2017) revealed that as Africa seeks to build and strengthen capable states, there is need to recognize the role of some traditional indigenous institutions such as the age-grade in respect to their advisory, participatory, developmental as well as mobilizing the population, promoting education and health care and not without inspiring respect for law and order (Dike and Ekejiuba, 2017).

At this time and age when government is geometrically shading its functions; collaboration, partnership and collective action by natives have become imperative for community development (Dooris and Heritage, 2017). Therefore, one of the factors that encourage the participation of age grades in community development is the need to fill the infrastructural gap created by government negligence and abandonment. Hence, many Igbo sons and daughters are beginning to adopt the think-home initiative aimed at bringing development home. According to Ejituwu (2016) given the marginalization of the south-east by the federal and state governments, it was only natural for the illustrious sons and daughters of Igbo extraction and age grades to adopt think-home philosophies and take up community development projects for the good of all.

Lack of evidence of physical development, infrastructural facilities and basic amenities in some traditional societies in Igbo land may have encouraged the age grades living far and near from these communities to intervene. According to Higgins (2018), many communities in Igbo land are in dire need of public infrastructure; some of which can be provided through the instrumentality of age- grade assisted community development projects. According to Ife (2016), it is laudable that all age groups in various communities embark on developmental projects that ensure that southeast probably remains the most developed region in Nigeria. Projects such as drainage constructions, rural road marking and construction, low cost housing units, hospitals, schools, markets, water supply, and other basic necessities are provided for the benefit of the rich and poor in the society (Ife, 2016).

Role of Age Grades in Community Development

From time immemorial till date, the age grade systems in Igbo land and indeed the entire southeast region of Nigeria have not lost their value especially their unique role in development and execution of community initiatives and projects (Agwu, 2016). A good number of public infrastructures that are in existence in Igbo land were conceived and executed by age- grades. The history of self-help projects dates back to the early 60s when community primary and secondary schools were executed by the community under the leadership of age- grades (Agwu, 2016). According to Ife (2016), *oganiru* (i.e. progress) age- grade is however the first that usually initiates and completes most community development projects in Igboland. Age- grades are also involved in the building of community town halls which provide common venue for community meetings outside the village squares.

In places like Orumba North in Anambra State, the *Oganiru* age-grade has sincerely paid its dues in community development especially when they further reinvented another sterling role of age grade system by constituting themselves into the most respected vigilante group in the area and neighbouring communities (Nwachi, 2021). Thus, communities in Orumba North and South Local Government Areas and indeed some other communities in the southeast today are currently experiencing formidable and reliable security outfits that have literally eradicated crime and criminalities in their areas. According to Elendu (2022) due to the inability of some traditional rulers and their President Generals to reach a compromise on how best to develop their community, many age- grades have unassumingly initiated, completed and attracted relevant government agencies to commission their self-help projects. Some of the crucial development projects initiated and, in some cases, completed by age grade system include: bloc of

classrooms, markets, residential buildings, Electricity Distribution Company's office, primary and secondary schools, building of magistrate courts, police posts, post-office buildings, Civic Centres, road constructions amongst others.

According to Eleazu (2020), each generic age- grade takes a special name that helps define its position in the community, but relative to other age grades. Members of each age grade are meant to know one another fairly well, to choose leaders among their members, to meet regularly to discuss issues of mutual or communal interest and should be willing to help one another and defend the community when the need arises (Nwachi, 2021 cited in Elendu, 2022)).

There are also wealthy age- grade members who go as far as empowering villagers to become productive citizens through training and retraining on skills acquisition, development of healthy lifestyle options, reduction household poverty and suffering, creation of employment and economic opportunities, achievement of social, economic, cultural and environmental goals (Azuonye, 2016). Therefore, age- grades through community development seek to improve quality of life in the neighbourhood (Cabaj and Weaver, 2016). Effective community development results in mutual benefit and shared responsibility among community members. Such development recognizes the connection between social, cultural, environmental and economic matters, the diversity of interests within a community and its relationship to human capital. Chidozie (2017) maintained that the role of age- grades in community development is vast and include building of schools, community projects such as road construction, markets, bridges, feeder roads, project maintenance among others.

Challenges that Age Grades Face from their Involvement in Community Development

In the work by Chukwu (2020), there are many challenges militating against the involvement of age- grades in community development, some of these challenges include: embezzlement of funds by the executive, lack of rule of law, impunity, moral impropriety, paucity of funds for development. Others include, leadership tussle, illegal collection of levies, favouritism, non-attendance of meetings by some members, illegal withdrawals from the groups' account, failure to prosecute individuals found wanting, culpable and trespassing on the rules and regulations of the age- grade association amongst others (Chukwu, 2020).

In addition, other problems, barriers or challenges identified by Ife (2016) include failure to create enabling environment for equity, fairness and justice. This manifests in the form of insufficient coherence and coordination between age- grade members and development agenda, hardship among local residents, persistent violence. Others included is criminatory practices and attitudes against fellow members, sabotage, insufficient recognition of the contributions of illustrious sons and daughters in the group, cases of disinformation or misinformation due to lack of feedback mechanisms from the officials of the age grade, unequal access to news, information and education, unequal access to supervisory roles during the execution of self-help projects, and lack of access and control over land resources in the community.

Furthermore, Ijere (2018) asserts that low income may also affect the role of age- grades in community development. According to the author, in the present world of sustainable development goals, community development can never be achieved without the involvement of community members, especially age-grades. The economic contribution and role of age- grades in every society is an indicator of the spread or otherwise of development efforts by the locals. Thus, the entire community development process should be more on the active participation of age- grades but the low point is that sometimes their leadership could be involved in corruption scandal leading to the stalling of all development efforts (Ijere, 2018).

In the recent past, some policies, programmes and projects were designed and established to assist low-income people in Nigeria, with a focus on the significant roles of age- grades and community developers (Njoku, 2016). According to Kalu (2018) since 1950, interventions such as poverty eradication programmes

were made to change the level of economic and social progress of rural people. Those interventions serve as the anti-poverty approach or reduction of poverty in the society but they are largely inadequate to pull many residents out of poverty; as such slowing down self-help projects.

Therefore, it is important to include more age categories in both the planning process of different economic and developmental organization, so that they can contribute meaningfully to community development (Nkata, 2015). Community development recognizes the use of natural resources as development potentials (Nnaji, 2017) and the natural resources are treated as factors of production that need to be used and maintained just like labour and capital. The aim is usually to improve livelihoods and development in rural areas and providing facilities and environment for their active contribution to economic and community developments. In reality however, many age- grade members are suffering from abject poverty and struggle to take good care of their families let alone contribute to community development. That is to say that low income clearly affects the role of some members of the age- grades in their bid to support community development initiatives.

Measures that could be put in place to encourage Age-Grades Participation in Community Development in Southeast, Nigeria

Community development empowers persons and groups within society to have capacity to improve their lives (Olisa, 2012). Community development by age- grades is a positive change and value- based process which aims to address imbalances in welfare and power based on inclusion, human rights, social justice and equity (Okonta, 2015). Therefore, in order to encourage the different roles of age-grades in community development, Uchendu (2021) believes that there is need to embrace a number of approaches namely; needs-based approach, the problem- solving approach, participatory approach, asset-based approach, the power-conflict management approach, welfare approach and rights-based approach.

- The needs-based approach is a situation whereby age-grades focus on the community's needs, deficiencies and problems. It focuses on identifying the most pressing needs in a community and creating external inputs to meet those needs.
- Under the problem- solving approach, age- grades focus on different methods that can be used in creating different solutions for the local problems confronting people in the community. For example, instead of them to wait for the government to fix their rural roads, a temporary measure such as using bulldozer to level the area will be a good way to go.
- With regards to participatory approach, members of age- grades focus on ensuring that people are educated and encouraged to participate in the development process. The people participate in every step from initiation to evaluation of every development project and programme.
- The asset- based community development approach is one that is sustainable and community driven. Here the community can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing but unrecognized assets for the general good.
- The power conflict approach entails that for age- grades to ensure a peaceful community, they would have to deal with existential conflicts that can slowdown progress and hamper development process.
- Welfare approach, by this measure, age-grades should collaborate with community volunteers to build their capacity which will eventually improve their happiness and eventually their prosperity.
- Right based approach; this is a measure that encourages age- grades to focus on ensuring that peoples' rights are respected. The process tries to uncover local human rights violations that have kept people in suffering and poverty.

According to Uguru (2015), in order to enhance the functioning of age- grades in traditional societies there is need to create results to overcome the challenges faced by age- grades that often prevent them from participating in community development. There is also need for members of the age- grades to create stronger and more networked communities through the construction of feeder roads to open up more areas

for development. This recommendation when implemented will help the locals to transport their farm produce and get involved in other economic activities for the prosperity of the community. According to Ugwu (2015), it is important to develop the hinterlands (rural areas) because the basic idea behind age grade systems in Igboland is to build communities based on justice, mutual respect, equality, egalitarianism, consensus, fairness, human rights, social justice through education and empowerment of people within their communities.

According to Kenny (2007) cited in Ujemba (2017), at the community level, age-grades engage in development and empowerment initiatives that can achieve long term outcomes such as stronger and more cohesive communities, evidenced by changes in social capital, civic engagement, social cohesion and improved health. To this end, there is need to encourage members of age- grades in various communities in Southeast of Nigeria to continue to do more to enhance the initiation and completion of more self-help projects, thereby enhancing rural renewal (also known as rural gentrification).

CONCLUSION

Age-grade system in Nigeria could be traced to the pre-colonial Nigeria that lacked informed government body. In the eastern section of Nigeria, it was a gerontocratic type of government where the oldest man in a given community ruled, assisted by the council of elders. In the western section, while the Oba stayed at the top, and the town chiefs assisted him, the oldest male headed the clans and the sub-clans. In the northern section dominated by the Hausa/Fulani people, the Emirs and town heads rule the people. Age-grades from time immemorial have always played key roles in community development in many communities in southeast through their active and effective participation. However, this study found that age-grade system in southeast, Nigeria has recently been experiencing challenges such as religious bias, poor funding, abandoned projects, bad leadership, division and lack of unity. To this end, stakeholders in local administration and community development such as the government, community leaders, elders in council, residents etc are by reason of this study called upon to intervene to encourage the functioning of age-grades system in communities, the time to act is now.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made for possible implementation: –

1. Government should partner with age-grades to promote community development. This amongst other factors will help to encourage active participation of age-grades in community development in communities in southeast, Nigeria.
2. There is need for more awareness on the roles of age- grades in community development. This sensitization exercise will help to make age-grades stronger and further enhance their capacity to participate in community development.
3. Government should recognize and support landmark community development projects in communities. This will serve to encourage members to be more committed to the ideals of their age-grade.
4. Government should support community development projects and setup a feedback mechanism to promote healthy competition amongst age-grades in different communities.

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