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**Community Involvement in Development Projects among Emerging Economies: A Retrospective Study of MDGs Programme in Nigeria.**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study examined the level of community involvement in Development Projects using the just concluded Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) programmers in Nigeria as a case study. Survey research design was used for the study where 350 respondents were used as sample with the help of multi stage sampling technique covering the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Data obtained were analyzed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The result revealed that in the Nigerian experience of MDGs, there was evidence that communities were involved in development projects to a large extent. In order to strengthen and enhance community involvement in developmental projects, the following recommendations were made; the community should be allowed to identify and make choice on the type of projects they want in their community. Also, the government officials should allow the community to be involved in the design, planning and formulation of the programmes. All these will encourage full involvement of the community.

**Keywords:** Community Involvement, MDGs, Development Initiative

**INTRODUCTION**

Community involvement in development activities is as old as man itself. Men had to work individually and collectively to make life better for them. Prior to the outset of colonial administration, communities had engaged in communal efforts as a mechanism for mobilizing community resources to provide physical improvement and functional facilities in the socio-political and economic aspects of their lives (Olukotun, 2008).

Communities who are the beneficiaries of projects should not be seen as targets of poverty reduction efforts but should be seen as assets and partners in the development process. In fact, experience has shown that given access to information and appropriate support, communities can effectively organize to provide goods and services that meet their immediate priorities. This is because communities have considerable capacity to plan and implement programmes when

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empowered (Tade, 2001). Communities, having enjoyed so much working and living together, having enjoyed each other's confidence and relationships, having collaborated for so long to achieve common objectives, having sat together to take decisions for common good would not easily accommodate 'strange' projects (Amos, 2003). It is logical and reasonable to think that any attempt at breaking this bond would be resisted. This is the reason for the failure of many projects that have no element of community involvement.

In Millennium Development Goals(MDGs) programmes, community involvement is also recognized and sought for in the design and implementation of development programmes since elected representatives most often do not always take care of the interest of the poor and local councils lack the capacities to articulate peoples development agenda, community's active participation is very necessary for sustainability (MDGs, 2008).

The United Nations at the Millennium summit on September 2000 in New York concretized and resolved to make measurable improvement on the lives of the world's poorest citizens through the development of eight point's agenda commonly called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They include;

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality and empower women
4. To reduce child mortality
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental sustainability
8. To develop a global partnership for development.

Among the eight MDGs, Nigeria has lagged behind seriously in goal number 7 and 8 which are ensuring environmental sustainability and development of global partnership for development respectively. For instance, UNDP (2008) asserts that between 2000 and 2010, the area of forest shrank by a third from 14.4% to 9.9%. Similarly, access to safe water and sanitation is a serious challenge because it was structurally difficult to translate substantially public investments in water into effective access. This requires more involvement by communities to identify local needs, and better planning to deliver sustainable solution.

A general view of Nigeria performance in the last decade as regard MDGs programmes is that Nigeria has not performed well and was unable to meet the 2015 target. As Oyasanya (2013) asserts, majority of Nigerians believed that only very little has been achieved through the MDGs programmes owing to the population of people living in abject poverty, the number of people

who could not send their children to school, inadequate health facilities, insufficient portable water, persistent environmental degradation and other negative developmental issues proposed to be addressed via the MDGs programme and projects.

Researcher such as Oyasanya (2013) and Olukotun (2008) have observed that a large number of MDGs projects such as dams, boreholes, small town/regional water schemes, healthcare centre, primary schools, skill acquisition centres etc initially aimed at serving the needs of the people were abandoned, due to lack of community ownership, poor maintenance and other reasons. That shows that local sub-contractors were not used for the MDGs projects. Community based organization and community leaders were not involved in the design and implementation of MDGs projects. Some MDGs projects are not respectful of community ideals and needs and that MDGs employees were not involved in community initiatives.

One major effect of community involvement in project is the assurance of sustainability. As Olukotun (2008) puts it, there ought to be genuine demand by a community or groups within it for all projects whether aided or non-aided by the government or any international agency. This eliminates the tendency to abandon the project when they are half-way completed and sustains the interest of the communities or groups within them in maintenance and protection of those projects. Some government officials in their 'wisdom' established projects in communities without consultations (idea generation and mode of implementation) with communities and majority of such projects either failed or were abandoned.

Government and development agencies felt that some communities were being difficult and that the level of participation was not significant enough and this situation has created an impasse between the donor agencies and government on one side, and benefitting communities on the other side (Oyasanya 2013). Where the government feels the community involvement is not very necessary since it may create undue difficulty, waste of time and possible politicizing of project, many scholars and benefitting communities feel that communities should be actively involved in developmental projects from the point of planning to execution in order to ensure the sustainability of the projects. The variations in thought, approaches and perceptions between the Government and donor agencies on one side and benefitting communities on the other side necessitated this study

### **Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of this study is to analyze actual effect of Community Involvement in development projects using the Nigerian experience of the Millennium Development Goals for the study. The specific objectives of the study are to;

1. Assess the level of community involvement in the design and implementation of the identified MDGs programmes.
2. Determine the effects of community participation on the sustained success of MDGs programmes.

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>01</sub>: Communities in Nigeria are not involved significantly in the programmes of MDGs in Nigeria.

H<sub>02</sub>: Community participation level has no significant effects on the sustained success of the MDGs programmes Nigeria.

### Research Method

Descriptive Survey research design was adopted for the study. Community projects of the Millennium Development Goals were randomly selected from the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. One state each was selected from each of the zones. Five projects each were selected randomly from each of the states for the study. Thirty projects were selected across the country. Ten respondents were selected for each project including community leaders, youth leaders, women leaders and project implementers. A total of 300 respondents were selected across the Nigeria for the study. This study used both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data collected.

### Results and Discussions

**Table 1: Distribution of Responses on the Level of Community Involvement in the programmes of MDGs**

S/N	Aspect of Community Involvement in MDGs programmes	Mean (x)	Decision
i.	Involvement in the development of programmes/projects plan	3.09	High
ii.	Involved in the evaluation of the projects	2.69	Low
iii.	Procurement of project materials	2.74	Low
iv.	Community project identification and implementation	3.01	High
v.	Involves in capacity building program/skill acquisition training	4.28	High
vi.	Contribution to project fund	2.46	Low
vii.	Involvement in decision making process	3.35	High
viii.	Provision of labour for MDGs projects	3.87	High
ix.	Provision of land for MDGs project site	4.51	High
x.	Involves in the monitoring, supervision and maintenance	3.74	High
xi.	Offer advisory services	3.26	High
xii.	Provision of security services	4.31	High
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>High</b>

Source: Field Survey May, 2015

The result presented in table 1 above was deduced from five (5) point scale rating with mean of 3.0 where any variable with mean score of 3.0 is low while any variable with mean score  $\geq 3.0$  is high. Therefore, the grand mean (3.42) revealed that the respondents were highly involved in

the programmes of MDGs in their communities. The community members were however not involved in the procurement of project materials and evaluation of the projects.

**Test of Hypothesis One (H<sub>01</sub>)**

H<sub>01</sub>: Communities in Nigeria are not involved significantly in the programmes of MDGs in Nigeria.

A one sample T-test was used to test the hypothesis and the result was illustrated in the table below:

**Table 2: Summary of T-test (One-Sample Test)**

	T	DF	Significant	Mean Difference
Involvement in Community Participation	91.341	74	.001	3.42

Source: Field Survey, May, 2015.

The table above reveals that community involvement in MDGs projects was significant at 0.05. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted which is that communities in Nigeria are involved significantly in the programmes of MDGs in Nigeria.

**Table 3: Distribution of Responses on the Effect of Community Involvement on MDGs**

Success			
S/N	Effects	Mean( $\bar{x}$ )	Decision
i.	Protection and adequate security of MDGs facilities	4.13	Agree
ii.	Enhance continuous usage/patronage of MDGs facilities	3.47	Agree
iii.	Efficient (cost effective) manufacture of MDGs projects	3.31	Agree
iv.	Reduces installation labour cost	3.55	Agree
v.	Facilities timely attainment of MDGs objectives	3.18	Agree
vi.	Encourages local contents in MDGS programmes	3.26	Agree
vii.	Reduces project abandonment	3.75	Agree
viii.	Enhances effective and timely delivery of quality project	3.03	Agree
ix.	Provision of land for MDGs project site	4.51	Agree
x.	Involves in the monitoring, supervision and maintenance	3.74	Agree
xi.	Offer advisory services	3.26	Agree
xii.	Provision of security services	4.31	Agree
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Source: Field Survey July, 2015

Table 3 is a descriptive analysis which showed that community involvement in the MDGs programmes As the majority of the respondents agreed to all the participation effect variables (Grand Mean) = 3.46)..

### Test of Hypothesis Two ( $H_{02}$ )

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Communities involvement level have no significant effect on the success and of the MDGs programmes.

The hypothesis was subjected to ANOVA test, so as to affirm or reject the claim on the effects of community involvement and the result is shown on the table below:

**Table 4: ANOVA Result Table**

Mode	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	257.619	20	278.530	5.902	.003
Within group	6560.095	79	47.192		
<b>Total</b>	<b>6817.714</b>	<b>99</b>			

### Decision:

The result from the ANOVA table shows that the F ratio of 5.902 was significant at 1% level of significance. Therefore, the null ( $H_{02}$ ) hypothesis was rejected while the alternate ( $H_{02}$ ) was accepted. That is, community involvement level has significant effect on the success of the MDGs programmes. This result further strengthens and affirms the descriptive analysis result table.

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of Findings

The study examined the effects of community involvement in developmental projects using the just concluded Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) programme as a case study in Nigeria. As such, evidence from the study revealed that, there is strong indication that the level of community involvement in these MDGs projects and programmes is high ( $x = 3.42$ ) as the community are involved in almost all aspects of MDGs programmes. The findings revealed also that, community involvement in MDGs programmes resulted to positive and significant effects. These effects include on protection and security of MDGs facilities, enhance continuous usage of MDGs facilities; cost effective maintenance and installation; as well as improve local contents in MDGs programmes.

## Conclusion

Community involvement is now widely recognized as a basic operational principle of community development. Conventionally, the participatory approach is considered as the reaction to the shortcomings of top-down developmental practices externally imposed and expert oriented. The advantage of this community involvement in the MDGs programmes is that, the development was centered on the role of the local community as a primary actor that should be allowed to influence and share the responsibility of the development process affecting their lives.

## Recommendations

In order to strengthen the full involvement of the community in the developmental projects, the following recommendations are made.

- ❖ The type/nature of any programme/project that will be executed should be identified by the community based on the felt need of the community. This will give them every capacity to achieve success of such projects.
- ❖ In order to boost the level of community involvement, the community should also be involved in development of project/programme plan; evaluation of project and in the procurement of project materials. This will enable them to take such programme/project as their own and collective property.
- ❖ Finally, the community should endeavour to be conducting meetings regularly, this will give them opportunity to know their common problems and how to solve it, also community leaders should be transparent in every dealings with developmental programmes and carry everybody along. This will give the community sense of belonging and direction; as such they will be encouraged to participate fully without any hindrance.

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