

Community Development and Extension Services: A Synergy for Rural Development in Nigeria

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Abstract. The role of community development and extension services in rural development throughout the world cannot be over-emphasized. Community development is viewed as a process of providing a concerted effort to develop a community with the goal of improving the quality of life of its members while Agricultural extension is the application of scientific research and new knowledge to agricultural practices through farmer education. They have remained the bedrock for rural development in Nigeria. This paper examines the scope and roles of extension services and community development as well as their collective effects on the development of rural areas in Nigeria. It is the belief of this paper that no nation can develop her rural areas without effective extension services and properly monitored community development. It is also the view of this paper that sustainable rural development can be achieved through effectively planned and well administered extension services and community development programmes and projects. This paper established that no reasonable rural development can take place without agricultural development and rural people's participation in the development efforts meant to develop their communities. The paper recommends that rural development efforts both from the government and Non-governmental organization should give the development of agriculture a priority through agricultural extension.

Keywords: Community, Development, Extension services, rural development, development programmes and projects.

1. Introduction

Rural development is any effort aimed at achieving enhanced rural production and productivity, greater socio-economic, equity and aspiration balance in social and economic development. Historically, Nigeria is a dominantly rural settlement. The 1963 Census recorded 80.2% of national population residing in the rural areas; in 1985, the proportion dropped to 70.13% and 69% by 1990s (Muoghalu, 1992 in Akpan, 2012). The figure according to World Development Reports (2005) dropped to 53% and 51.6% in 2011 according to World Bank Report (2011) and further dropped to only forty-nine per cent (49%) of total population in 2012 (The World Bank) Group in Babalola (2012). Despite this reduction in the percentage of rural population and various urbanisation programmes, seventy per cent (70%) of the world's poor still live in rural areas (TWBG, 2012).

Ever since, Nigeria got her independence in 1960, rural development has been declared a priority by the successful governments (civilian or military) due to the fact that rural sector is very vital in the socio-economic development of the nation. The rural areas, for instance, is the major source of capital formation for the country and a principal market for domestic

manufacturers (Olatunbosun, 1975). The rural areas also engage in primary economic activities that form the foundation for Nigeria economic development (Chukwuemeka, Ugwuanyi and Amobi, 2013). Up till now, most of the industries in the urban areas of the country depend largely on the products from rural areas. In a nutshell, the provision of food and raw materials for urban population and industries have made activities in the rural areas affect the majority of the active population in Nigeria,

The emphasis on rural development by national, regional, state and local government as well as non-governmental organizations is to ensure food security for both the rural and urban population and steady supply of raw materials to industries. In the Nigeria's second National Development Plan of 1970-1974 (Nigeria, 1970 in Inedu, 2016) the broad objectives of the country's rural development include creating rural employment opportunities with a view of checking rural outmigration and improving the level and quality of social services and infrastructural facilities. In order to achieve these objectives, Idiode (1989) in Akpomuvie (2010) highlighted three major approaches to rural development to include the extension approach, the project approach and service approach. He further explained that, extension approach involves indirectly teaching of the rural people improved methods and techniques of farming, healthcare or how to read and write. The project approach to rural development is generally motivated by the governments desire to improve the economic conditions of rural areas through the establishment of economic ventures such as government farms and rural industries. The project approach is the contributions of the governments and NGOs to rural development.

The service approach to rural development calls for active participation and initiative of local people. This approach concentrates on the provision of social amenities such as culverts, bridges, maternity centres, bore-holes, health centres, and electricity, among others. The service approach is usually referred to as community development.

Community development is a process that brings about change in many aspects of community living especially in the areas of social, economic, cultural as well as environmental. The focus of community development process is the people's involvement whereby the community members come together to take action collectively to meet their shared goal(s) or to generate solutions overcoming a shared problems Rahim & Asnarulkhadi, (2010). The participation of community members in providing solutions to problems confronting them is one the principles that makes community development one of the best approach to community development, The role of community development is to develop members' capabilities and potentials to affect their wellbeing and quality of life through maximizing resources utilization to benefit them socially and economically Rahim & Asnarulkhadi, (2010)..

Agricultural extension functions by encouraging and involving rural people's own organizations, enhancing individual and collective self-reliance, and environmental issues. From the analysis it is clear that extension is different from rural development. Agricultural extension has contributed to the development of rural areas in the areas of food security, dissemination of useful agricultural information, sustainability of development projects and empowerment of farming groups (Zwane, 2012).

Since community development ensures community people's involvement in the development process affecting them, and agricultural extension is aimed at developing rural areas through agriculture and farm families, there is a need therefore to harmonize the two together so as to ensure speedy development of rural areas in Nigeria. Agricultural projects such as the establishment of farm settlements, construction of irrigation dams, processing industries and markets can be incorporated into community development projects whereby community people will be able to agree together on which of the projects should come first before another. The extension agents and community development officers can work

together with community members to bring about sustainable rural development.

This paper, therefore, aims at examining community development and extension services as synergy for rural development. This paper is divided into four sections following; the introduction section comes literature review on the concept of extension, objectives and principles of principles community development and agricultural extension services and rural development. The third section attempts a systematic review of the contributions of community development and extension services to rural development. This is followed by the concluding remarks.

2. Concept of Rural Development

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic wellbeing of people living a rural area, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated area (Moseley, 2003). This view was expressed by World Bank in her 2000 report where rural development is defined to include all strategies and policies designed at improving the economic and social life of a specific group of people; that is the rural poor.

The main aim of rural development is to better the life of people living in the rural areas. According to Jibowo (2000) in Ogbeide (2015), rural development involves the integration of the rural people, which constitute the majority of the population of the most developing countries into national economy. The emphasis here is on how to ensure that rural dwellers contribute their own quota to the growth of the national economy after transforming their lives through improved economy. Rural development involves the identification, analysis and proposal of relevant solutions to problems facing rural communities. In line with this, FAO (2014) opined that rural development process is usually encompassed within a programme or a project that seeks to tackle the identified problems facing the rural community.

Since the problems facing rural communities are many, the development efforts aimed at rural

areas are also multi-dimensional in nature. In line with this, Olayiwole and Adeleye (2005) identified and classified the infrastructural development requirements of the rural areas into three namely: Basic infrastructure, social infrastructure and institutionalized infrastructure. According to them, basic infrastructure includes availability of good roads, water, rural electricity, storage and processing facilities among others. The social infrastructure include with health and educational facilities, community centres, fire and security services and the like. The institutionalized infrastructures include credit and financial institutions and agricultural research institutions to aid the economic activities and income of the rural population. The provision of these infrastructures ensures integrated rural development that entails the promotion of rural productive activity, supportive human resource development and enlargement of enabling rural infrastructure (Chukwuemeka, 2013).

2.1 Objectives of Rural Development

Based on the aim of rural development which is improving the total welfare of rural people, Ijere (1990) in Raheem & Bako (2014) identified the following objectives of rural development:

- To have greater commitment of the resources to the rural areas in terms of budgeting allocation and actual expenditure;
- To ensure popular participation of the rural people in the identification of priorities, planning of programmes as well as their implementation
- To lay greater emphasis on the use of total resources and promotion of local skills;
- To expand and improve on rural infrastructure such as roads, markets, Malls, electricity, water and storage facilities;
- To maintain political and social stability; to create rural employment opportunities and
- To increase commodity output and production and subsequently increase

food, food supply as well as rural incomes.

The principles of rural development as explained by Alkali (1992) are as follows:

Accessibility: Rural development programmes must be accessible to all rural dwellers especially the poor peasant farmers. All people within the target population should benefit from rural development programmes.

Independence: Any rural development programme should be such that helps and support the rural dwellers but does not make their livelihood 100% dependent on the programme.

Sustainability: Any rural development programme must be relevant to the local social, economic and administrative conditions of the target rural population. The programme should be sustained until the problem of the area has been addressed.

Effectiveness: A rural development programme should be based on the effective use of local resources that are readily available in the community.

Participation: Rural dwellers should be actively involved at the various stages of the programme; from conception state to the implementation and evaluate stages.

Having examined the concept of rural development, attempt will be made to examine the concept of community development.

3. Concept of Community Development

Community development refers to the manifestation of a variety of local capabilities to mobilize and manage resources to meet diverse local needs. Turner, Barnett & Brennen, (2009) states that, communities are endowed naturally with resources needed to satisfy their needs, but members of the community need to be mobilized to make use of these available resources. It is a process that leads to change in many aspects of community living which include social, economic, cultural as well as environmental

(Sail & Abu-Samah, 2010). Community development is, thus, being viewed as a process of change in the lives of community members. It is about continual involvement, first with the help of change agents (extension agents and community development officers) and later, by the people themselves to bring about change in their lives which ultimately improve their quality of life (Sail & Abu-Samah, 2010).

According to Rubin and Rubin (2001), community development occurs when people strengthen the bonds within their neighbourhood, build social networks, and form their own organisations to provide a long-term capacity for problem solving. Community members will effect changes in their lives if they are able to agree together to solve common problems. Community development requires the involvement of community members more than the activities of non-members.

The major objectives of community development are:

- To change the outlook of all rural people,
- To improve existing village occupation, to improve fairness, freedom without interference with the freedom of others and
- To increase the availability and widen the distribution of basic life-sustaining goods such as food, shelter, health, and protection.

The main purpose of community development is to build communities on the basis of justice, mutual respect and equity (Atieno, 2019). He further breaks down the purpose to include:

Bring people together to motivate themselves through programmes geared towards their overall development as a unit of the society, encouraging togetherness and teamwork to bring about a sense of strength, to bring social reforms through discharging ancient social and cultural practices that are outdated and possibly harmful, creating awareness on various social concerns such as health, poverty, hunger, and promoting good governance as it ensures the community leaders are on their toes.

4. Extension Services in Rural Development

Extension is an educational process which is applied to rural people which supports them, identified and solves their problems. It is a procedure which happens over a long period of time, if not just something that has one activity (Oakley & Garforth, 1985). The major aim of extension is to assist rural people solve their problems if possible permanently. According to Rivera (1989), extension is a provider of non-formal agricultural related continued education for multiple audiences such as farmer, spouses, youth, and rural community. It does not focus on farmers alone but on the entire rural population to improve its standard of living.

The most widely used definition of extension is the one given by Swanson in one of the FAO's publications, where extension is seen as a service or system which assist farm people, through educational procedures, in improving farming methods and techniques, increasing production efficiency and income, bettering their levels of living and gifting the social and educational standard of rural life (Swanson & Clair, 1984). Extension ensures all round development of rural population financially, socially and educationally.

All the objectives of extension are expressed based on its outcome. The fundamental objectives of extension according to Kassa and Temesger (2011) are:

The dissemination of useful knowledge and information relating to agriculture, including the use of improved technologies and improved cultural practices in a variety of farming practices. To improve all aspects of rural people's lives within the framework of the national development policies and people's need for development.

These objectives were further broken down by Murray and Gaur (2007) into four and this include:

- To assist people to identify their problems and felt and unfelt needs,

- develop leadership among various sectors of the rural community,
- transmit information based on agricultural research and applied experience with a view to bring about larger farm community under new modern technology and
- keep research workers constantly informed about the problems of farm level to offer solutions based on further research in the specific area concerned.

Extension has continuously help to transmit research findings to farmers and relay farmer's problem to research institutes for possible solutions. Planning and practicing of extension are based on the following principles as highlighted by Kassa and Temesgen (2011) are as follows:

- The extension work must be based on the people's needs, customs, traditions, beliefs and value of the people.
- Extension encourages people to take action and work out their own solutions to their problems rather than receiving readymade solutions.
- Extension work should be based on the full utilization of local leaders.
- An extension programme should be flexible so that necessary changes can be made whenever needed to meet the varying conditions of the people.
- Extension should be a cooperative action involving participatory activity in which people cooperate to pursue a common cause.
- The success of extension has to be measured by the level of satisfaction of the people or the beneficiaries.
- Extension should be based on constant evaluation.
- The effectiveness of the work is measured in terms of the changes brought in knowledge, skills, and attitude and the adoption of changed behaviour of the people, and not merely in terms of achievement.

The extension process is concerned with communicating the technology of scientific

agriculture to the farmers in order to transform traditional level of agriculture to better for improving the economic conditions of farmers (Sadakhadula & Gaur, 2007). Hence, the extension is an approach of rural development through farming family. The transformation from traditional to modern agriculture will lead to increase in farmer's productivity, income and profit. This will lead to individual transformation that will bring about the rural transformation.

Extension has and is making significant contributions in the rural areas in the areas of food security, information dissemination, empowerment of farming groups. Food security is the term used for food availability, food access and food utilization (USAID, 1995 in Zuwane, 2012). Food availability in sufficient quantities is consistently available to all individuals within a country through a well organised and well-coordinated extension.

Extension makes relevant information available to farmers in the areas of production, cultural practices, market and marketing. This information has assisted rural farmers to develop small enterprises and discovering new alternatives for obtaining profits. Extension is playing an important role in the empowerment of rural farmers to have access to capital through savings or credit (Zuwane, 2012). When farmers have access to capital or credit, they will increase the size of the farm holdings and production and this in turn will lead to increase in production and profit. Farmers' empowerment could also come through the building of farmers' institutions, organizing farmers into associations, commodity groups and other forms of cooperative activities (Zuwane, 2012).

5. Community Development in Rural Development

Community development is a process that leads to change in many aspects of community living which include social, economic, cultural as well as environmental (Sail & Abu-Samah, 2012). In other words, community development has helped to ensure the social, economic and cultural development of rural areas through the efforts that come from the people themselves.

The central means by which community development and rural development is the self-help approach that emphasise on grassroots efforts that are directed towards central government goals (Robinson & Green, 2010).

Community development also ensures rural development through the empowerment of community members, thereby enabling them to move towards a goal or vision. Community development is defined by Christenson and Robinson (1989) as a group of people in a locality, initiating a social action process that seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing these groups with skills they need to effect change in their own communities. When people are empowered, they actively participate in rural development programmes meant for their community.

Community development also contributes to rural development through education and change. Education is the process of teaching people how to live better by learning ways that improve their life (Behzad & Ahmad, 2012). They listed different areas by which community development brings about changes in the lives of rural dwellers through education to include: Change in what people know – their knowledge of themselves, of their society and their physical environment. Change in what they can do – their skills, mental and physical. Change in what people think and feel – their attitude towards themselves; towards their society and towards their physical environment. Change in what people actually do – their actions related to factors determining their own welfare.

These changes in what people know, in what they think, in what they can do and in what they actually do enable them to effect positive changes in their rural community.

6. Community Development and Extension : A Synergy of Rural Development

Rural development involve creating and widening opportunities for (rural) individuals to realize full potential through education and sharing in decision and action which affect their

lives Obinne in Ogidefa (2010). He also viewed it as efforts to increase rural output and create employment opportunities while eliminating fundamental (or extreme) cases of poverty, diseases and ignorance.

Therefore, Mayowa, (2014) opined that combining all the essential elements of development, rural development can be described as the integrated approach to food production as well as physical, social and institutional infrastructural provisions with an ultimate goal of bringing about both quantitative and qualitative changes which result in improved living standard of the rural population.

Integrated rural development is a multipurpose approach in which case, programmes of agriculture, education, health, rural electrification, cooperatives among others are considered in connection with each other rather than being treated in isolation. It is this development that led Nigeria to adopt several approaches/strategies towards improving the well-being of the rural dwellers. Such strategies include:-Community Development, Agricultural Extension, Coordinated Rural Development and Integrated Rural Development. From the above, it could be observed that both the community development and agricultural extension are strategies for rural development.

While community development ensures that people themselves exert their own effort joining with government authorities to improve their economic, social and cultural conditions; it is designed to promote better living for the whole community with active participation and initiative of the people. It encourages the use of self-help and cooperative efforts on the part of the community but with technical assistance from government or voluntary agencies. It emphasizes group action in improving rural conditions. People work together to shape their own future.

Agricultural extension as a strategy of rural development, on the other hand, is concerned with the efforts to develop rural communities through agriculture. It is believed that agriculture as the major occupation of the rural dwellers is the economic foundation for rural

development. It is concerned with rural problems such as nutrition, health, cooperatives as well as collaboration with other agencies directly responsible for rural development. Williams (1978) in Mayowa, (2019) summed up Extension in three basic task comprising: disseminating useful information, applying it to analysis of practical problem and helping people to use it to help themselves.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

It can finally be established that no reasonable rural development can take place without rural people's participation, and development effort that does not involve the people to which the development is meant may be successful. This is the major reason why some development projects and programmes are abandoned in the rural areas. Since community development ensures participation of rural dwellers in the development efforts meant for them, sustainable rural development will be achieved if communities are developed using community and development approach. Also since agriculture is the main occupation of the rural dwellers, rural development efforts both from the government and non-governmental organization should give the development of agriculture a priority through agricultural extension.

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