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## Participation of Rural Youths in Community Development Projects in Ideato- North Local Government Area of Imo-State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The study analyzed the participation of rural youths in community development projects in Ideato north local government area of Imo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study identified the socio-economic characteristics of youths, identified types of community development projects embarked upon and executed by the youths and level of participation of youths in the community development projects in the study area. Data were collected with the aid of questionnaire distributed to sixty (60) youths who were randomly selected. Data were analysed with descriptive statistical tools. The result of the study revealed that majority, (68.3%) of the youths were male, married (60%), and (43.3%), attained tertiary education, majority of the youths fall within the age bracket of 35-45 years of age. The mean age was 42 years, implying the youths were energetic enough to embark on physical activities and could contribute labour for community development projects. The rural youths were engaged in several economic activities for livelihood such as farming (26.7%), civil service (25%), trading (21.7%) and artisan (16.7%). Projects embarked upon were ranked in ascending order of importance as follows: water (1st), School building project (2nd), street light project (3rd), Road project (4th), Hospital project (5th), Erosion control project (6th) and Agricultural project (7th). These projects have reflected their order of importance and needs in the study area. Projects activities recorded to have been participated in were; follow-up evaluation (ms=2.40), monitoring work (ms=2.17); mobilization of funds (ms=2.17); project identification (ms=2.01). The study recommended government should through the ministry of agriculture and rural development and food security an enlightenment campaign to mobilize every member of the community irrespective of their social status, encourage sustainable youth involvement in community development projects.

Keywords: Rural youths, Community development, Participation, Ideato North, Imo-state, Nigeria.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the study

Young people are critical in community development efforts. They constitute the largest segment of the population (Nwachukwu, 2022). Young people have numerous assets which could be brought to yield positive results in achieving community development. Such as, relevant education, and training, enthusiasm, hope and new ideas, willingness to learn and be taught, openness, skills and technology and realistic expectations (Morris, 2006). Community development can be defined as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Their common problems could be in the areas of economic or social well being, environmental and cultural issues jointly arrive at and initiative of members as problem of the community. Community development projects always affect the livelihood of community members. Livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (Dev et al., 2003). Participation in community development means

being involved in community development, implying taking part in planning, decision-making and execution of projects related to the development of the community. Youth participation is an important factor in community development. Without participation. There are obviously no partnerships, no development and no programmes (Nwaobiala, Ogbonna and Egbutah, 2014).

### ***1.2 Statement of the problem***

It has often been argued that community development projects like building of schools, hospital building and bus stops have not made significant impacts in the lives of the people because of some weaknesses in the planning and implementation stages of the projects. Most times, the community stakeholders are not carried along in the initial stage of the project. This results in the abandonment and incompleteness of the project because the people do not take ownership of the projects. While poor participation in community development projects has not impacted positively on youths in Ideato North Local government area, there is scanty information on the extent to which the youth are involved in the planning and execution of community development projects, which has created a gap in knowledge. There is therefore the need to bridge these gaps in knowledge by carrying out a detailed study on level of participation in community development projects in the Ideato North Local government area. According to Barbara (1998), community development projects planning and execution have been the target of sharp criticism as their shortcomings are becoming increasingly evident. Thus, there is the need to find out the challenges associated with projects initiated through this development approach in the study area. Understanding the barriers to their participation and enhancing their involvement will lead to sustainable community development in Ideato North LGA. There is the need therefore to bridge this gap in knowledge of these constraints that could hamper successful community development projects in the study area.

### ***1.3 Objective of the study***

The broad objective of this study is to analyse the participation of youths in community development projects in Ideato North Local Government Area of Imo State Nigeria. The specific objectives are to;

- i. Describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the youths,
- ii. identify types of community development projects embarked upon and executed by the youths
- iii. Analyse the level of participation of youths' participation in community development projects,

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted in Ideato North Local Government area of Imo state. Ideato North LGA has typical features of a rural area with agriculture being the main economic activities, it is one of the 27 local government areas that make up of Imo state. (Imo State Government, 2020). Ideato North LGA lies between latitude 5.8833 N and longitude 7.1500 E (Geographical survey of Nigeria, 2015). The area has a land mass of 172.4km (National Bureau of statistics, 2018). Data were collected using primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained using a set of structured questionnaire administered to 60 youths in the study area. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to select sample for the study, in the first stage, four autonomous communities of 8 autonomous communities in the LGA were randomly selected. Second stage of sampling 15 youths were randomly selected from the 4 communities selected making the total number 60 youths involved in the study.

## **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***4.1 Socioeconomic characteristics***

#### ***4.1.1 Age***

**Table 4.1: Distribution of youths according to Age**

Age category (years)	Frequency	Percent (%)
26 – 34	6	10.0
35 – 43	26	43.3
44 – 52	28	46.7
Total	60	100.0

(mean age) X 42years

**Source: Field survey data, 2024**

Table 4.1 show that majority (46.7%) of the youths were within the age bracket of 44 – 52 years, while 43.3% were between 35 – 43 years of the age. For 26 – 34 years, there were only 10% of the youths found in this category of age. The mean age of the youths was 42 years. At this age, the individual has energy to engage in social activities and also receptive to changes in the society.

#### 4.1.2

**Table 4.2: Distribution of youths by sex**

Sex	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	41	68.3
Female	19	31.7
Total	60	100.0

**Source: Field survey data, 2024**

Table 4.2 reveal that majority(68.3%) of the youths were male, while (31.7%) were female .The dominance of male in the study could be due to the socio-cultural tendencies that usually favour the male against the female.such biases could hinder participation in community development projects and deny the community the potentials and contribution from the female demographic unit.

#### 4.3 Marital status

**Table :Distribution of youths by marital status**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Single	14	23.3
Married	36	60.0
Divorced	3	5.0
Widowed	4	6.7
Separated	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

**Source: Field survey data, 2024**

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of youths by marital status. The study revealed that 60% of the youths were married, while 23.3% were single, 6.7% windowed, divorced and separated were 5% for each of the marital categories. Marriage is a social institution that gives a legal right to live with a man or woman and have children. Which confers responsibilities to the individuals. from this result it is believed that the youths in the study area were responsible persons and could be trusted with development projects. thus, the home could be placed on a vintage position to respond appropriately to the gains of community development projects.

#### 4.4 Level of Education

Table 4.4 Distribution of youths by level of education

Level Of Education	Frequency	Percent (%)
Non-formal	2	3.3
Primary	11	18.3
Secondary	21	35.0
Tertiary	26	43.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey data, 2024

Table 4.4 shows the distribution of youths according to their educational level. The result revealed the majority (43.3%) of the youths have attained tertiary education, followed by (35%) that has acquired secondary education. more than (18.3%) has primary education and only (3.3%) has no education. This implies a high literacy level among the youths in the study area. Education is an asset for community development and increase rationality and ability to cease development opportunities. Literacy equips the person with ability to source for information and communicate with stakeholders in the community for cooperation that will achieve the improvement in the community.

#### 4.5 Household size

Table 4.5: Distribution of youths by household size

Household size range	Frequency	Percent (%)
1-4	30	50.0
5-8	26	43.3
9-12	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0

X=4.5 Persons

Source: Field survey data, 2024

The distribution of youths according to household size shows that majority (50.0%) of the youths has a household size of within the bracket of 1 to 4 persons, while (43.3%) has household size between 5 and 8 persons. only (6.7%) of the youths have household size of 9 and 12 persons. The mean household size was 4.5 persons. The above shows a small household

size. Which could be a reflection of hard economic reality of the time in the rural communities. Large household size are no more in vogue because economic downturns among household heads.

#### 4.6 Membership of social organization

Table 4.6: Distribution of youths by Membership of social organization

Membership status	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	34	56.7
Yes	26	43.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey data, 2024

Distribution of youths according to membership of social organization as shown in table 4.6 .it shows that majority (56.7%) of youths were not members of any social organization,while (43,3%) were members of social organization.Research findings have shown that membership of social organization imparts a predisposition to participate and adopt new technologies (Nziane,2009).This reveals that youths of the study area might be denying themselves the advantages of belonging to social organization.

#### 4.7 Cosmopolitan status

Table 4.7:Distribution of youths by cosmopolitan status

Cosmopolitan Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Never	15	25.8
Seldom	17	28.3
Sometimes	21	35.0
Always	7	11.7
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey data, 2024

Table 4.7 shows the distribution of youths according to their cosmopolitan status. The table shows that majority (35%) of the youths affirmed that they sometimes visit urban areas, while (28,3%) seldomly visit the urban areas. only (11.7%) always visit the urban areas. visiting urban areas gives the youths the benefits of exposing them to development activities and projects which could motivate them to participate in community development projects.

#### 4.8 Level of income

Table 4.8: Distributon of youths by level of income

Income Class (N)	Frequency	Percent (%)
20000 – 180000	55	91.7
180001- 340001	4	6.7
340002 – 500002	1	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

X= N83,650.00

**Source: Field survey data, 2024**

Table 4.8 shows the distribution of the youths by level of income. It reveals that majority(91.7%) earn between #20,000 and #180,000,while 6.7% earn between #180 and #340001.only 1.6% earn #340002 and #500002.the mean income #83,650.00 only.the apparent high mean income above that national minimum wage indicates the combination of income sources in the rural area. Apart from farming. The complement income from other means for sustenance. This implies that this level of income could encourage the youths to participate, contribute and fund community development projects.

#### 4.9 Major Occupation

Table 4.9:Distribution of youths by major occupation

Major Occupation	Frequency	Percent (%)
Farming	16	26.7
Civil service	15	25.0
Artisan	10	16.7
Trading	13	21.7
Others	6	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field survey data, 2024**

Table 4.9 shows the distribution of youths by major employment. it shows that majority (26.7%) were farmers, while 25% were civil servants and 21% were engaged in trading. About 16.7% indicated their major employment as artisanship and 10% were other means of livelihood which abound in rural community is such as hawking, and wage labour .

#### 4.10 Community Development Projects

Table 10: Distribution of youths by community development projects embarked upon

Community Development Projects	Frequency	Percent (%)	Rank
School building	34	56.67	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Water project	53	88.33	1 <sup>st</sup>
Road project	25	41.67	4 <sup>th</sup>
Hospital Project	17	28.33	5 <sup>th</sup>
Street light project	28	46.67	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Erosion control project	16	26.67	6 <sup>th</sup> ~
Agricultural project	6	10.0	7 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field survey data, 2024

Table 10 shows the distribution of youths by community development projects embarked upon. The results reveal that water projects were indicated as the most (88.33%) project embarked by the youths followed by school building (56.67%), street light (46.67%), road project (41.67%), and Erosion control (26.67%). Access to water in the rural communities has been a perennial problem, reflecting an important need of the community members. School building was ranked second, showing the importance youths attached to education in the community. It is striking to note that agricultural projects were ranked the least 10% and 7<sup>th</sup> of community projects embarked upon by the youths. This reveals the low interest of rural youths in agricultural development in rural communities, which impacts on agricultural low productivity in the rural area since agricultural activities have been abandoned for old people in the rural communities.

#### 4.3 Level of Participation in areas of projects activities

Table 11: Distribution of youths by the level of participation in areas of project activities in community development projects

Areas of project activities	Fully participated (FP)(3)	Partially No Participation	No Participation	Standard Deviation	Mean Score	Remarks
Project identification	15 (25)	26(13.3)	19(31.7)	.76	2.01	Participation
Prioritizing of project	17(28.3)	27(45)	16(26.7)	.75	1.98	Non- Participation
Planning	14(23.3)	28(46.7)	18(30)	.73	2.07	Participation
Mobilizing funds	19(31.7)	20(33.3)	21(35)	.82	2.03	Participation

Areas of project activities	Fully participated (FP)(3)	Partially No Participation	No Participation	Standard Deviation	Mean Score	Remarks
Monitoring work	13(21.7)	24(40)	23(38.3)	.76	2.17	Participation
Mobilizing of community members	14(23.3)	38(63.3)	8(13.3)	.60	1.9	Non – Participation
Labour supply	11(18.3)	29(48.3)	20(33.3)	.71	2.15	Participation
Follow-up evaluation	9(13.3)	20(33.3)	32(53.3)	.72	2.40	Participation

**Source: Field survey data, 2024**

Results in Table 11 shows the level of participation in areas of projects activities in community development by the youths .Using the discriminating index  $\leq 2.0$  for participation and  $<2.0$  for not participated.the table showed that the youths participated in six (6) out of eight (8) areas of community development projects activities in the study area.The standard deviation ranged between 0.82 and 0.71 showing high level of unity in response by the youths.follow-up evaluation recorded the highest mean score of (2.40), followed by monitoring of work (2.17).Mobilizing of funds has a mean score of (2.03) and with the highest standard deviation of (0.82). The results also showed that mobilizing of community members has the lowest mean score of (1.90).this could be because participation is a personal opinion that does not require exertion of external pressure.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that sustainable community development cannot be achieved without the active involvement of rural youths,as they represent the strength,creativity and continuity of rural communités. Encouraging their participation through proper training ,access to credit facilities, leadership inclusion and supportive government policies will not only enhance project success but also promote a sense of ownership and responsibility among youths.

## Recommendations

1. Government and non- governmental organizations should design and implement empowerment programmes aimed at improving the skills, knowledge and confidence of rural youths to participate actively in community development projects.
2. Government and community collaboration
3. Incentives for active participation
4. Capacity bbuilding and training.

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