

Constraints to international donor agencies' community development assistance in rural Rivers State, Southern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT:

This study examined the impediments to international Donor agencies' community development efforts in the rural sector of Rivers State, Nigeria. One hundred community dwellers (men, women and youth) were interviewed, using scheduled questionnaires. Also, three international Donor agencies (World Bank, Micro Project Programme and United Nations Development Programme) involved in the community development activities of Rivers State participated in the study. Data realized from the respondents were analysed using percentages, mean scores and Analysis of Variance. The study revealed that the nature of development projects and the constraints faced by beneficiary communities and the donor agencies differed significantly ($p>0.05$). The donor agencies provided assistance in agriculture, small scale enterprises, health care services, education/training, and physical infrastructure. However, the three agencies focused mainly on agriculture, health care and infrastructural services. The major problems to effective implementation of the development programme included administrative bottleneck, insufficient and diversion of project funds, youth restiveness, ill-trained and shortage of field staff, inadequate community development facilities and project disagreement among the beneficiary communities. To improve on the community development efforts in the rural areas of the state, a critical consideration of the outlined bottlenecks was advised.

Keywords:

Constraints, Rural Development, Donor Agencies

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INTRODUCTION

Lele and Adu-Nyako (1991) expressed that poverty in Africa is predominantly a rural phenomenon. The World Bank (1990) also estimated that over 1.15 billion people in developing countries were living below poverty line (US \$250 per annum) and majority of these dwell in rural areas which constitute about 80% of their nation's populations. Thus, government alone cannot attend effectively to all the needs of the people in the rural communities. The government technical staff, finances and other logistics required to meet the development needs of everybody in the innumerable villages in Nigeria are most inadequate. The situation necessitated the call for assistance from the international donor agencies to complement the efforts of Federal and state governments in development of the rural sector. However, despite the numerous developmental projects and programmes initiated and supported by these agencies, there still appears to be a general underdevelopment and poor living standards among the rural dwellers in Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta (Lawson, 2008 and Nwachinyere, 2008).

Rivers State in the Niger Delta, Southern Nigeria, is a resource oil-rich, densely populated and ethnically diverse region. It is characterized by a high incidence of conflict, having been marginalized in previous national development programme (Chukuigwe, 2006). The state of affairs in this long neglected region had been orchestrated by many of the international donor agencies at different times, and a good number of them have thus embarked on projects and programmes in the state. This is with a view to alleviating the poverty of the people occasioned by the exploration and exploitation of the resources domiciled in this area. However, Obuzor (1998), found that the activities of multi-national oil companies in Rivers State have caused a great damage and destruction of farm lands, residential areas, streams and rivers, thus impoverishing the rural people the more. Worse still, the indigenes are either employed at the low

cadre or are not employed at all by the oil companies, thus creating disunity, tension, conflict, hostage-taking and destruction of company facilities by the youth in the operational areas. With the current level of community/youth restiveness, militancy, hostage-taking and general unrest that have bedeviled Rivers State, one wonders how well these donor agencies have performed in relation to development of the rural communities. This has provoked the need to undertake this study with the following research questions:

1. What are the personal characteristic of the respondents?
2. Which are the international donor agencies operating in the rural Rivers communities, and what are the type and nature of development assistance rendered by the donor agencies?
3. What are the challenges that affect the success of the development projects?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Rivers State. The state is located within the oil rich Niger Delta area of Nigeria. Twenty-three local government areas made up the state with sixteen of them predominantly land areas, while seven are riverine areas. The study was specifically carried out in five predominantly rural Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state which included Degema, Tai, Etche, Ikwerre and Abua-Odual.

In each of these five LGAs, two communities which have benefited from international Donors' assistance were purposively selected for the study. They are: Degema (Isokun and Obuama), Tai (Ban Ogoi and Sime), Etche (Edegelem and Ulakwo II), Ikwerre (Elele and Isiokpo) and Abua-Odual (Otari and Okoboh).

From each of the communities, ten respondents (men, women, youth and children were randomly selected making a total of one hundred (100) respondents for the study. Data were collected from the respondents using interview schedules. Three international Donor



Agencies involved in community development of the rural areas of Rivers State were studied. They included: World Bank (WB), Micro Project Programme (MPP3) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Percentages, mean scores (derived from five-point Likert type scale) and Analysis of Variance were utilized for data analysis.

RESULTS OF DISCUSSION

Personal Characteristics of the Respondents

The respondents’ personal features such as age, sex, marital status, educational attainment and primary occupation are shown in **Table 1**. Majority of them (36%) fell within the age bracket of 40-49, while the least number of the respondents (3%) fell within 20-29 years. Their mean age was 31.7 years. This shows that they were mainly adults experienced enough to select, formulate or welcome projects/programmes that would improve their livelihood. Gender of the respondents showed that 77% of them were males, while 23% were females. The disparity in the number may be attributed to the leadership role of men in project selection, formulation and implementation (Williams, 1978). The respondents’ marital status highlighted that majority of them (90%) were married. Educational training of the respondents showed that most of them had at least primary education. Most of them (35%) attained higher education but 3% of them did not have formal education. Their high literacy level is an advantage in understanding, formulating and implementing the projects assisted by the donor agencies. The main occupation of the people were civil service (32%) and farming (27%). The high number of respondents engaged in farming in the rural communities is good for rural development. This confirms the opinion of Windapo (2000), that agricultural development is a subject of rural development in Nigeria that the development strategy put in place is such that there is concomitant development of both.

Table 1: Personal characteristics of the Respondents

Age distribution of the Respondents

Age (years)	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	
20-29	3	2	Mean Age: 31.7
30-39	22	22	
40-49	36	36	
50-59	28	28	
60-69	11	11	
Total	100	100	

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Male	77	77
Female	23	33
Total	100	100

Marital Status of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Single	5	5
Married	90	90
Divorced	2	2
Widowed	1	1
Separated	2	2
Total	100	100

Respondents’ Highest Educational Attainment

Educational level	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
No formal education	3	3
Primary education	28	28
Commercial school	1	1
Secondary school	13	13
Teachers training	20	20
college	35	35
Higher education		
Total	100	100

Respondents’ Primary Occupation

Primary occupation	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Farming	27	27
Teaching	18	18
Public/civil servant	32	32
Trading/business	15	15
Retiree	8	8
Total	100	100

Table 2 reveals that the presence of two of the three donor agencies under study (WB & MPP3) was felt in each of the five selected LGAs (Tai, Degema, Ikwerre, Etche and Abua). The third donor agency (UNDP), rendered assistance to only two of the five selected LGAs (Degema & Etche). On the whole, a total of 46% of the respondents attested to have benefited from WB assistance, 49% from MPP3, while only 5% received assistance from UNDP.

Table 2: Distribution of the Benefiting LGAs by Donors

Donor Agency	Tai LGA	Degema LGA	Etche LGA	Ikwerre LGA	Abua/ Odual LGA	Total	(%)	mean
	(f)	(f)	(f)	(f)	(f)			
WB	10	7	10	4	15	46	46	9.20
MPP3	10	9	9	16	5	49	49	9.80
UNDP	0	4	1	0	0	5	55	0.25
Total	20	20	20	20	20	100	100	

INFORMATION ABOUT THE DONOR AGENCIES

Development Areas of Assistance by the Donors

Donor Agency	Agric	Small scale enterp.	Health care service	Edu. /trg	Infrastr.	Total	(%)	mean
	(f)	(f)	(f)	(f)	(f)			
WB	42	0	3	0	1	46	46	9.20
MPP3	0	1	14	9	25	49	49	9.80
UNDP	0	4	1	0	0	5	5	0.25
Total	42	5	18	9	26	100	100	

Nature of Assistance rendered by the Donors

Donor Agency	Cash only	Marital only	Cash/ material	Total	(%)	Mean
	(f)	(f)	(f)			
WB	16	25	5	46	46	15.33
MPP3	2	34	13	49	49	16.33
UNDP	2	2	1	5	5	1.67
Total	20	61	29	100	100	

Table 3 also shows the areas of development the donor agencies rendered assistance to the selected rural communities. Whereas World Bank focused on agriculture (indicated by 42% of the respondents) which is a major sector for rural development, MPP3 concentrated on infrastructure (25%), health care services (14%) and education/training (9%). UNDP on the other hand emphasized on small scale enterprise (4%). The three donor agencies were thus complementary, providing assistance in a wide range of development areas for the communities under study.

The assistance rendered by the donor agencies are in three categories as displayed in table 2. All the donor agencies rendered assistance, using cash donation, material donation, and a combination of the two but more by material donation than cash i.e 34% for MPP3, 25% for World and 2% for UNDP. The preference of

material donation may not be far from, to forestall diversion of project funds by implementors.

Constraints to Effective Implementation of the Development Projects

Table 3 shows the factors limiting effective development of projects in the rural communities. The table reveals that the World Bank and its beneficiary communities were faced with the following challenges: shortage of trained extension staff (3.15), administrative bottleneck (3.04), disagreement among beneficiaries (2.78), diversion of project funds (2.61), inadequate funding by donors (3.04), delayed release of assistance (3.33), and lack of storage and processing facilities (2.63). The MPP3 and her community recorded youth restiveness and military (3.05), poor quality work by beneficiaries (2.58) and high cost of materials (3.02) as major factors affecting development assisted projects. Only administrative bottleneck (2.80) was the major



Table 3: Challenges that affected the Assisted Projects

	Challenges (as seen by donors)	WB	Mean Scores (X) MPP3	UNDP
1.	Communal classes	1.76	2.39	1.60
2	Youth restiveness & militancy	2.39	3.05*	1.60
3	Beneficiaries failure to pay matching grant	2.13	1.92	2.40
4	Poor understanding of project	2.43	2.04	2.00
5	Shortage of trained extension staff	3.15*	1.92	2.00
6	Poor quality work by beneficiaries	2.39	2.58*	1.80
7	Administrative bottleneck	3.04*	2.26	2.80*
8	Disagreement among beneficiaries	2.78*	1.83	1.40
9	Wrong site for project	1.87	1.51	1.20
10	Diversion of project funds	2.61*	2.00	1.2
	Challenges (as seen by beneficiaries)			
11	Inadequate funding from donors	3.04*	2.39	2.40
12	Delayed release of assistance	3.33*	2.00	2.40
13	High cost of materials	2.11	3.02*	2.40
14	Lack of storage and processing facilities	2.63*	1.24	2.00
15	Poor market outlets	2.22	1.76	2.20
16	Natural disasters	1.92	1.53	2.20
17	High transportation cost	2.96	2.08	1.40

constraint of the UNDP development projects. In a separate studies by Chukuigwe (2006) and Gabriel-Pidomson (2008), youth restiveness, militancy, hostage-taking and community crisis had been identified as serious hindrance to develop efforts of governments and oil companies in rural communities of the Niger Delta of which Rivers State is worst affected.

Test of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference in the challenges faced by the international donor agencies in implementing their development projects.

Table 4 indicates that the f-cal. (2394.07) > f-table (3.63) at 0.05 significant level. The null hypothesis was rejected, implying that the constraints faced by the international donor agencies were different. The difference in the limiting factors could be because the donor agencies operate in different local government areas and communities with their own specific problems.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that the international Donor Agencies rendered assistance to community development in the rural areas of Rivers State. This was confirmed by the projects and programmes supported in various forms by the three different donor agencies namely World Bank, Micro-project Programme and United Nations Development Programme, in the study area. The content, nature and spread of the assistance, however, varied among the donor agencies. Though the supporting agencies focused on different development areas, these complemented to address the overall development needs of the communities studied. The challenges encountered by the donor agencies and benefitting communities in implementing the development projects in the study areas differed. The administrative bottleneck faced by the donor agencies especially on monitoring and supervision should be

Table 4: ANOVA Result Showing the Difference in the Challenges faced by the International Donor Agencies

Source variation	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square	F-ratio
Constraints	35.020	16	2.189	f-cal=2394.07
Donor agencies	20408.275	2	10204.137	
Residual	136.392	32	4.262	F-tab = 3.63
Total	20579.686	50	411.594	

Significant @ p>0.05



intensified to ensure that implementers of the assistance render good quality work for the supported projects. The number of beneficiaries and the local government areas covered by the donor activities should be improved upon. Other challenges identified by the study should be critically addressed to enhance effectiveness in the support projects.

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