



## Community Development Leadership in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria: Challenges and Strategies for Improvement.

### KEYWORDS

Community development, community leadership, challenges, strategies.

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### ABSTRACT

*The main focus of this study was community development leadership in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria: Challenge and strategies for improvement. Two research questions were posed to guide the study. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study comprised of all the community leaders in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State of Nigeria. The sample of the study was 320 community leaders selected through proportionate sampling technique. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection which was dully validated by two experts in community development and one expert in measurement and Evaluation. Data collected was analyze using mean. The reliability of the instrument was 0.82 obtained through Cronback Alpha among the major findings of the study were that the community development leadership challenges include lack of funds, poor accountability, lack of people involvement among others. Some of the strategies include mobilization of people for social change, adopting transparent leadership, involving people in development process. One of the recommendations is that government should provide community development leadership training for community leaders to equip them with leadership knowledge and skills.*

### Introduction

The idea of community leadership stems from the overall need to provide a directive force that can serve as a role model in the general process of development. Allison (2012) sees community leadership as one that is made up of those in the community that take on leadership roles and how those individuals fulfill those roles. Hermsillo (2012) asserted that community leadership is the activities of a group who recognize specific issues or needs within a community (whether it be local, national or global) and not only resolve to find solutions; but also seek to understand all aspects of the situation which creates the issues and needs and their impacts on possible solutions. Community leaders need to be innovative solvers; lest they offer only temporary solutions that do not deal with the deeper issues within a community. Effective community leaders must be willing to determine the root causes of problems to overcome them and create thriving communities.

According to Anyanwu (1999), community development relies heavily on local leadership to elicit the enthusiasm of the people. This is to ensure that it is not only the change agents who are paid officials, but also the local leaders who act as the agents of development in their communities. Community leaders are very often volunteers and they are perhaps the very real agents of social change and improvement in their communities. This is why the community development agent must endeavor, at the initial stage, leadership in his client community. Community leadership fosters participation in decisions affecting the lives and welfare of people in the community. It creates faith in common understanding, philosophy of success, ultimate satisfaction of personal and community motives, integrity of objective authority and superiority of community purpose.

Community development according to Ajayi (1995) is a social process by which human beings can become more competent to live with and gain some control over local conditions and the changing world. Sustainable community development cannot take place through force or order, but

is mostly likely to happen when all actors participate and share their ideas, visions and responsibilities equally and democratically in steering and implementing their community or village development projects (Ajayi and Otuya, 2006). In the same vein, one approach in creating sustainable rural development is through giving the main actors (villagers living in the community) an equal opportunity to think and plan their own future. This underpins the need for effective leadership at the rural community levels in order to harness the efforts of the rural people towards their own development (Orapin, 1996). It is, therefore, the role of community leaders to tackle development issues in their communities without much reliance on government.

Unfortunately, the level of community development projects in most communities in Nsukka Education Zone does not seem to be encouraging. This is because the survey of the communities indicates that some projects started some years ago have not been finished which is a gap or lack that has to be bridged. For this reason, most people especially the youths migrate to urban communities to enjoy social amenities which rural counterparts fail to provide. One begins to wonder what roles the community leaders play in developing their rural communities to avail themselves and other rank and files of their lots. Could it be that the community leaders were not well oriented to developmental issues or that they are faces with a lot of challenges that militate against their performance in their desired roles that would have engendered positive development in their communities? It is possible that if adequate leadership strategies are employed, the rate of development in the communities would be increased, hence the need for this study.

### Research Questions

The study was guided by two research questions:

1. What are the challenges militating against community leaders in community development projects?
2. What are the strategies for ameliorating the challenges of community leaders in community development projects?

## Methods and Materials

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted all the community leaders in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The sample of the study was 320 community leaders selected through proportionate sampling technique from the local government areas that make up the zone. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection which was validated by two experts in community development. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficient of 0.82 which was adjusted highly enough. A criterion mean of 2.5 was adopted. This implies that items with mean up to 2.5 and above were accepted while those below 2.5 were rejected. The mean scores were also ranked from first to last position.

## Results

**Table 1: Mean ratings of the community leaders on the challenges militating against them in community development projects.**

S/N	Challenges	Mean	Rank
1.	Lack of funds	3.71	1 <sup>st</sup>
2.	Lack of management know-how	2.84	14 <sup>th</sup>
3.	Conflicts	3.26	6 <sup>th</sup>
4.	Illiteracy/ignorance	2.93	12 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Embezzlement of public fund	3.46	3 <sup>rd</sup>
6.	Poor implement of public fund	2.77	15 <sup>th</sup>
7.	Divide and rule system	2.85	13 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Bribery and corruption	3.22	7 <sup>th</sup>
9.	Lack of mobilization strategies	3.17	8 <sup>th</sup>
10.	Lack of co-operation between stakeholders and community leaders	2.66	17 <sup>th</sup>
11.	Lack of administrative skills	2.70	16 <sup>th</sup>
12.	Poor accountability	3.64	2 <sup>nd</sup>
13.	Poor leadership	3.35	5 <sup>h</sup>
14.	Inadequate publicity/Information	2.94	11 <sup>th</sup>
15.	Gender discrimination	2.55	19 <sup>th</sup>
16.	Land tenure system	2.61	18 <sup>th</sup>
17.	Lack of people involvement	3.43	4 <sup>th</sup>
18.	Poor monitoring and evaluation	3.00	9 <sup>th</sup>
19.	Selfish interest of some leaders	2.98	10 <sup>th</sup>

Table 1 revealed that all the items were accepted by the community leaders as challenges confronting them in community development projects. This is because all the items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5 which indicates acceptance.

**Table 2: Mean ratings of the community leaders on the strategies for ameliorating the challenges.**

S/N	Strategies	Mean	Rank
1.	Mobilizing people for social change	3.67	5 <sup>th</sup>
2.	Protection of completed projects	3.42	11 <sup>th</sup>
3.	Adequate utilization of available resources	3.66	6 <sup>th</sup>
4.	Providing the link between the community and the government, non-governmental organizations or philanthropists	3.65	7 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Resolutions of conflicts and disagreement as they arise in community.	3.73	2 <sup>nd</sup>
6.	Encouraging people participation in development activities	3.709	3 <sup>rd</sup>
7.	Ensuring that local people air their views	3.68	4 <sup>th</sup>
8.	Monitoring and evaluation of projects	3.12	14 <sup>th</sup>
9.	Challenging inappropriate behavior or external factors	2.94	16 <sup>th</sup>
10.	Managing and raising of funds through different sources.	3.10	15 <sup>th</sup>

11.	Maintaining cordial relationship with people	2.88	17 <sup>th</sup>
12.	Prioritization of community needs	2.74	18 <sup>th</sup>
13.	Providing adequate information to the people	3.36	13 <sup>th</sup>
14.	Adopting transparent leadership	3.75	1 <sup>st</sup>
15.	Use of committees in resolving issues	3.56	9 <sup>th</sup>
16.	Organizing leadership training for leaders	3.40	12 <sup>th</sup>
17.	Integrating women in development programmes	2.61	19 <sup>th</sup>
18.	Formation of formidable organizations	3.48	10 <sup>th</sup>
19.	Use of integrated rural development	3.64	8 <sup>th</sup>

Table 2 equally revealed that all the items were accepted by the community leaders as strategies for ameliorating the challenges. This is because all the items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.5 which indicated acceptance.

## Discussion

The result of data analysis in research question one showed that all the items in table 1 were accepted by the respondents as challenges militating against their performance in community development projects. These problems range from lack of funds to selfish interest of some leaders. This is in line with Ugboh (2007) that insufficient funds have prevented many good ideas that were developed in communities. Respondents noted that a lot of projected were started and abandoned before competing them as a result of insufficient funds and that even the little available funds are not properly used due to corruption, embezzlement and lack of transparency.

In the same vein, conflict is another major challenges that cripples the performance of community leaders in their community. This is agreement with Imhabekhai (2009) who noted, that in any conflict or crises prone community, meaningful development cannot take place. This is because development can only thrive in a peaceful environment. Also, the energy and resources of the community would be dissipated towards conflicts or crises. Cooperation highly desirable in community development is often absent among the people since hatred, mistrust and hostility reign in the community. Where there is no cooperation, community members become individualistic and resources mobilization becomes difficult.

The result of the analysis in research question 2 revealed that all the items are strategies that would ameliorate the challenges if they are adequately utilized. These strategies range from mobilizing people for social change to formation of formidable organization which will engender population community development. This corroborates with the view of Anyanwu (1987) that mobilization of people in the rural areas involves using such strategies as mass media like video, posters, pamphlets, to motivate them and win there acceptance for change and development as well as involving the participants in the formation, implementation and evaluation of the projects or programmes. The author further maintained that organizing launchings, encourage community organization and ensuring sound leadership are also strategies for enhancing community development projects.

In the same vein, integrated rural development is another strategy that brings enormous developments at the same time. This conforms with Esenjor (1992) that the need for integrated rural development arose out of the realization that the sectorial approach to rural development is not en-

compassing enough as many related variables involved in the overall pattern of rural development are ignored. The objective of integrated rural development is to provide for all aspects of rural development, particularly increased rural incomes, adequate roads, marketing and credit facilities and training for the inhabitants. Thus, making rural areas attractive to young school leavers and stop urban migration.

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### Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is evident that community leadership remains the catalyst by which human efforts are enabled to pursue the incessant interchanges of energies and satisfaction for the immediate growth of the community and the ultimate development of the nation. Nonetheless, in the process of bringing about desirable social changes in communities, a number of challenges persist thereby retarding the rate at which development is achieved. Such challenges can be ameliorated through some prospective strategies that have been suggested in this paper. The community development leaders should therefore endeavor to imbibe themselves with theory and practice of community development so as to bring about desirable changes for better living among the people in the community.

### Recommendations

**Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:**

1. Community leaders should make effort to mobilize members of the community on the need for community development. This will help to ensure popular participation of people in development projects.
2. There is the need for community leaders to utilize their available resources and make effort for financial assistance by government and non-governmental organizations if need be for development of their communities.
3. Community leaders should adopt transparent leadership to avoid people's doubt in their leadership.
4. The government should provide community development leadership training for community leaders to equip them with the knowledge and skills of community development theories and practices that will help them perform in their areas of authority.

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