

BOTTOM-UP APPROACH & EFFECTIVENESS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS IN BAYELSA STATE (2015-2023).

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Abstract: *The article on bottom-top approach and effectiveness of rural development projects in Bayelsa State (2015-2023) as a follow-up of the research on re-activating abandoned projects for sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2030) in Bayelsa State was carried out to assess how decisions made by the rural people has affected and enhanced development of the rural dwellers. The objective of this is to find out if the top-down or bottom-up approach to decision making, improves infrastructural development among the rural populace or not. The System theory and Home rule theory were employed to support the theoretical framework. Content analysis was adopted based on the arrays of literature that was at the disposal of the researchers. Findings revealed thus: (i) Gigantic projects initiated by politicians (top-down approach) are biased on usage, and does not in any way improve the life of rural people, such projects overtime are abandoned because of low turnover which are suppose to support efforts for turn-around maintenance. (ii) Corrupt tendencies are ruled out when projects are community based (that is project initiated by the people, down-up approach) (iii) The people see such projects as*

their own pet projects, hence, give utmost care and protect the projects. (iv) Craftsmanship makes them protect the projects against vandals and stealing. From the above the research recommends thus: (i) To see the rural groupings as a fourth tier of government in terms of rural projects other than the local government administration system. (ii) Government should give more attention to decisions made by the rural people (bottom-up approach) in terms of establishing any projects. (iii) That even though decisions of instituting projects may come from the government (top-down approach) it should consider to incorporate and consult the rural people for their inputs. (iv) The rural people should be allowed some degree of autonomy, where the Home rule policy/law will be encouraged.

Keywords: *Bottom-up, Top-Down, Sustainable Development.*



Introduction

The article on bottom-top approach and effectiveness of rural developmental projects in Bayelsa State (2015-2023) is a follow up of the research on re-activating abandoned projects for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 in Bayelsa State (Makbere & Ifidi, 2024, p106). Findings from the former research reveals that government haven't imbibed maintenance culture over the years, hence there are several dotted abandoned projects littered everywhere especially in the state capital. It was also revealed that must projects were not prioritize ones, projects initiated were borne out of corruption (Makbere & Ifidil, 2024, pp.111 & 135), inability to finish existing ones before establishing new ones, etc.

Drawing a nexus between these two studies established on the ground that all projects are the product of one government or another which comes through policy/decision making. One of the key objects of the re-activating abandoned projects of the SDGs in Bayelsa State is to examine the lack of maintenance of the developmental projects in Bayelsa State. It is therefore the desire of this study to ascertain if, projects that have the consent of the people (bottom-top) consideration are more development oriented and more beneficial to the rural dwellers than gigantic "elite" projects which are not the people's choice or not.

Bayelsa State was created on the 1st of October, 1996 by the head of the military junta, late General Sani Abacha. It is one of the states that produce the wealth of Nigeria, because of its crude oil and gas deposit. The state was created to mitigate the plights of the people and the area because of the oil exploitation and exploration activities which resulted to the degradation and pollution of the land over the decades and the subsequent agitations from the various agitators. As a new state, even the state capital was in dire need of both human and infrastructural developments.

Different administrations both in the military and civil rule have subsisted itself with the federal allocations as proceeds from oil derivation and other internally generated revenues to run the government, particularly in the areas of payment of salaries, human and physical development (Ibaba, 2017, p34). Frantic efforts have also been put in place by the various administrations to ensure development by instituting projects of different kinds in all the nooks and cronies of the state, but most of the projects are not a priority to the people. Some of the projects are without clarity of purpose, relevance, emotionally appeal and a call-to-action, rather, they are established for political motives, which do not really benefit the general public, but to fulfill the parochial interests of political actors. The unfortunate aspect is that these projects are funded with tax payers' monies, and since the projects are not to the benefit of the people or the common man, they have low patronage.

Other regimes that come may have seen these projects as ones that will not benefit the people and so decided to discontinue it. There is also no bottom-top policy approach where government consults the people before establishing the projects. A case in point is the cargo airport project funded and constructed by the government of Bayelsa State which does not have or add any economic or social value to the common man or low-income earners. The question is how many people can travel by air or can afford airline freights? Again, how many business men and women are in Bayelsa State that can patronize cargo planes? Airport project is laudable, but very expensive and so, the point is whether it is a priority project that can touch the lives of the people or not.



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This is what this study tends to find out.

To throw more light on what this study is all about, is to say that one of the policies that has helped the oil producing communities cluster systems is the common understanding where proceeds paid to oil bearing communities are brought together, which makes them come together under a “cluster arrangement” to decide the kind of project(s) that will benefit every member of the community (ies). Under this arrangement, consultations are widely made and the peoples’ opinion is sought for, before projects are instituted. In the end, whatever project they decide to embark upon is believed to be a generally accepted one, which will have high impact rate and will affect every community member.

The continuation of this process had enhanced the completion and finishing of projects which proportionately amount to both physical and human development. But a situation where government unilaterally decides what project to institute, especially where the project is not to the benefit of the general public, which the project would have addressed only one sector, while the other areas will be lacking thereby reducing the level of patronages. This in the far future becomes obsolete and will deface the physical environment.

In this context, the approach welcome inputs and ideas from two different institutions-government or donor agencies (as sponsors of the project) and communities (who are the beneficiaries of the project) co-sponsors of the project (government/community). Whichever angle it is viewed from, instituting a project needs to be a joint consideration from both (government and the benefiting community) so that the project will be for everybody. And because it was a choice made by both parties, it will not be for a group or set of people alone. Recent observations have shown that people at the top who make decisions are often heard and listened to than those below the ladder. They have the media, money and political power, the police and the will to decide anything, against the wish of the people.

Again, the elites in the society who have the resources can sponsor personal decisions against the will of a legitimate government. The case of the undue pressure mounted on the then minister of finance and coordinating economy of Nigeria, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, to resign her appointment because of subsidy removal is a case in reference. Her aged mother was kidnapped to this effect (2018, p.2

Statement of the Problem

So many projects do not have the backing or the consent of the end-users, before constructing them and so do not stand the test of time, since the project do not have wide users value. Projects that are constructed without the interest of the public are prone to sabotage, and are vandalized by locales and villagers over times (Markbere & Ifidi, 2024, p 137). Again and most essentially, socio-economic goods that are highly patronized by the low-income earners are goods such as road networks, health facilities, electricity, education and portable drinking water which the people are ready to pay for the services are becoming scarce, ever since the elites and those in governance decides to allow the purvey of capitalist economy has caused constrain and restrain to the rural dwellers to gain access and enjoy some essential amenities.

Also, because of the high capitalist tendencies the ‘elite goods’ are now being establish than projects that will be of benefit to the common man. From the economic point of view, every product produced is aimed at making profit (from the economic man’s perspective) rather than the economics of scale. Even at this, when considering the economic man’s point of view, goods produce to increase profit margins that can be affordable



by many people, end up being products for few people, thereby reducing the profit margins and relegating the interest of the common man, since the products are patronized by few elites. Normally, the more the patronage, the more profit margins, which can be used to service other areas of the economy, even at the rural areas but where projects are produced to care for a particular status or group of people, lack of patronage can make the project to be abandoned; especially where there is no turnover, which invariably may affect the maintenance of that project. This will automatically lead to the abandoning of the project by subsequent administration that are prudent, especially if the administration sees the project as a drain-pipe for spending tax payers' money. These problems have elicited the reasons why this study is being conducted.

Objective of the Study

One of the objectives of the previous research was to investigate the purpose of abandoned project in Bayelsa State by Makbere & Ifidi; (2024, p.106). On this research, which is considered as a following of the other, the objective is to find out if in any way and manner, the policy/ decision that prompted the take-off of any project whether (top-down or bottom-up) approach is the cause of rural infrastructure development in Bayelsa State, taken from (2015 - 2023) or not. Project(s) establishment to the best of the knowledge of any body comes from the decision or policy made by government or governance to help address the immediate needs of a people. This in most case is from the (top- down approach). And these, sometimes result to the establishment of elite projects. Political bargaining may also give the direction to what may be. And this may affect the life wire and the sustainability of that project.

On the other hand, project(s) that emanates or are initiated by the people (bottom –up approach) although may be funded by the government/ donors, may have longer life span, due to the attachment of importance and craftsmanship from the villagers. This research is being carried out to know if such project will be more sustained, protected, and have a more longer life since it was initiated by the villagers, and will on a long run encourage rural development or not.

Research Question

A rising from above objective, our research question will thus be: How does the bottom-top approach to decision making aid the development of the rural people in terms of infrastructure?

Significance of the Research

This research will be of importance to the government and policy makers in thinking which form of policy (top-down) (bottom up) approach to decision-making will benefit the rural areas in terms of infrastructural development. It will also enable the government to decide if the rural areas can be seen as a fourth-tier of government. Agreed, that the 1976 guideline for the reform of local government in Nigeria, sees the local government “as a level of government excited through representative council established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas”(Njoku, 2009, p.383) and also, Odenigwe in Okafor & Nwantu (2009,p.282) sees local government as a system of local administration under which local communities and towns are organized to maintain law and order, provide some limited range of social services and public amenities to encourage joint partial portion of the rural populace in other to improve their lots. But the question is, has the local administration which is under the local government area in every community? The answer is no! And, has this really encouraged development! This research will help find out.

Review of Related Literature



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Bottom-Up Approach

The bottom-up or down-up approach is a means of decision-making where means of infrastructural development are initiated from the local level to a higher level of authority or governance to boost development. This does not imply in a case where those at the lower level (subordinates) issues a command or order, but a means where free hands are given by those at the top for those below to use their initiatives to make decisions on how to solve problem or tackle issues. It is otherwise known as Management by Objective (MBO) or Management by Initiative (MBI).

Under this, the process examines a wholistic and schematic presentation of how to pursue goals and achieve same (Druker, 1954) in Onah (2005, pp.121-22). It allows those at the bottom (subordinates) staff to come out with articulated views on how to achieve success in either official, community or government endeavours without undue interference; even in a very well organized or corporate organization. It is like the principles of devolution of power where other higher authorities allow the local authorities function on their behalf. Here, the process of choice making amongst other alternative or options are entirely in the hands of those embarking on the work, to get the target (Cole & Kelly, 2011, p. 590).

Furthermore, the down-up or bottom-up approach could be seen as a situation where specification of jobs or any form of assignments to be carried out as described. Accountability is ensured and based on the requirements; the individuals or people involved deliver the job. There may be a team leader, superior or a coach to ensure accountabilities and deliverability. Under the down-up arrangement, the classical and rational belief that commands and decisions have to come from the top hierarchy is down played. Rather those at the “rear” are allowed some degrees of autonomy to articulate what they have or knowledgeable about for success to be enlisted.

The fact here remains that in both approaches (top-down or down-up/bottom) brainstorming is a common phenomenon where ideas can be reached. It is a truism that apart from the government and other donor bodies who conceive the ideas of instituting projects and sponsoring same, there are people outside the management team or government/governance who have the ability of seeing a project through, provided every other parameter are kept in place. Robbins & Judge (2013, p.329) called them “Normal Group Technique”, under decision making. Normally, all organizations are made up of people with ideas and techniques and every group or strata have such people in all the categories. So those under or beneath the managerial /administrative cadres (bottom down) also have people who can brainstorm especially when it comes to thinking of what to do (rational which is the degree of reasonability).

The argument that is been conveyed here holds that, if those at the top who makes decision down the hierarchy are rational enough or maybe by virtue or rising to management position, can make decisions (which most times are bias to only a set of people) those at the bottom/down can equally make decisions that can sustain any project and bring it to lime light. (This is not a platform for argument as to whether top-down approach is better than down-up or not). But because as opined by Robbins & Judge (2013,p.329) the “Nominal Group Technique” are groups that can be found or formed at every level in any organization.

According to the duo, the group constitutes individuals who with restriction discusses or interpersonally communicate during decision-making process, hence, they are termed as “nominal”. Like the old traditional committee meeting which members operate independently, they make themselves available to take decision of



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what is found and is available to take decision on what to do. The point here is that, this quality is found and is available at every level in any organization. And most at times, this approach is seen as been more effective. For example, in Bayelsa state, there is an organization that is globally recognized as State Empowerment and Expenditure for Result (SEEFOR). This is a body that stands on behalf of the donor or government who works in collaboration with the community to provide social amenities. Under this, the donor bodies or government provide money and the communities provide labour, raw materials and security (counter-part funding) for the proposed project. Sometimes, communities that are living close to each other (neighbor) form cluster team to manage the fund while the government and donor agencies play the supervisory roles to ensure projects are carried out and finished.

Bottom-up approach is “participatory”, it encourages local democracy and concerted managerial acumen. These levels of personal leadership ability are not equal, they are different. But most importantly, there is a collective process which enables them takes charge of their own environmental development. The approach in decision- making is the type that allows the villagers or community members and the indigenous players express their views, and to proffer explanation on development course in their own way, expectations and plans. Although, this approach cannot be applied systematically in all places and at all times, the system depends on the different cultural context according to the ‘Member State’ which must be in tandem with the principle of; self-control’ (that is subsidiarity), with the process of group effort which is frequent in happening or desire that has working approach than a daily routine. This approach makes leadership style useful (Monday, 2019). The idea promotes functionalities with the aim of making the local communities and local development players have focus on the rural development agenda.

Bottom-Up Model for Rural Development

One of the ways to promote national development globally is to encourage integration and strongly emphasize to see the corporation of the poor and the wealthy people in government projects. Apart from forming a partnership with the locals, with both the public and private sectors, they can also contribute to the implementation of rural development policies at every level and also supplement decisions already reached by the parliaments and other levels that make laws.

Bottom-Up Approach and the Principle of Devolution and Decentralization of Power

Bottom-up has been explained as a process where decision-making comes from the people outside the line of formal organizational structure. It also means decision not taken by the higher echelon of the management team of an organizational setting; it involves a situation where decisions are taken different from the normally conventional three tiers of government.

In his claims, Njoku asserts that some countries like Nigeria see field administration as a typical example of decentralization. This is where the theory comes to play. The home rule was first used in the state of Missouri, USA in 1875, when the state legislature permitted municipalities a measure of self-government is the degree at which the rural people can give the freedom to initiative, adequate peoples representation, peoples participation, mobilize their resource and manage it effectively, distribute same, mobilize an expenditure pattern of either the region or local council to conform with the needs of local area (Njoku, 2009, p.33).

He further stressed that, this may have the need to a four-tier structure of local government where the district, ward, community and village levels governance to promote rural development and decongest activities at the



centre. He reiterated that the problem is not about the structure or charter laws made to back it, but the willingness and the ability to allow rural participation, bring together resources, and have equitable distribution and utilization of the resources for the benefit of all and their welfare. This is mostly and commonly practiced in India and the United State of America. Njoku emphasized that, this practice can remove the undue political interference, by political actors in the local administration system, so that, the people can be served well and their activities will not be hijacked by the political elites (Njoku, 2009, p.34).

The interest of devolution of power is in a situation where the power is given from the central government to the local government without interference-Autonomy. The whole of these activities and processes of government is, in nut-shell bottom-up approaches where the rural people are given the freedom to have a home rule approach to operate. It means, where decisions are taken by the local government, and not either by the state or federal government. And at the local government level, decision is rather taken by the rural people to enhance development on their own. Under this, interference from higher authority is very minimal. This is to boost development at the rural levels, but financial support may come from either the regional, central government or both and from support donors.

According to Gargano, (2021, p.77) the bottom-up approach is another governance framework, centered around the local partnership process, where local or rural development issues are discussed and considered. This may be through the supervision of government, directly. Government here may be at any levels (local, regional or the centre).The whole gamut of the idea of encouraging rural development is borne out of the “principle of devolution of power/decentralization, but the irony is that, in practice, it is not possible although, few amenities like primary health care and schools are in every community. These cannot be a yardstick to measure development.

According to Oguna (1999) cited in Njoku (2009, p.285) defines devolution as a process where political power is transferred from the centre to the periphery; for example, from the centre to the Parastatals, Departments, Ministries and Local Government Areas, for effective governance. Here the type and nature of projects are determined and decided by the community’s members, who are referred to as host communities. The only way the poor can feel a sense of belonging is when the government incorporates them to participate in decision making that has to do with developing the country. This encourages the bottom- top approach (MD-Shahidulla, 2020, p. 98).

In the same vein, Lewis and Uphoff (1988) in Shahidulla(2020, p. 98)claimed that only when the poor drives and makes input through participation, that they at the rural areas can feel the impact of government projects. Some of the advantages of bottom- up approach of decision making is that, the project development are cost – effective, sustainable, replicable, have high level of accountability, feedback and transparency. These factors have unarguably contributed to the success of development projects. So, a bottom-up approach encourages team work, and induces high enthusiasm among the participating individuals.

The only sorry side or aspects of the bottom-up approach is that formal developing economies do not give the poor the opportunities or room to contribute their ideas. Equally, they are not given the chance to change their standard of living. This is due to the fact that they (the poor) do not have access to formal economy, owing to lack of capital, formal education and collateral to obtain loans from the bank to improve their lots. Based on these, their voices cannot be heard and full government responsibilities haven’t been given or ceded to them.



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Basically, the bottom-up approach has the purpose of encouraging a process of bringing all the local people in the community to participate in all aspect of development policy. It also gives room to seek for local players at all levels, through wiser think- tank meetings or by ways of bringing them to work in partnership. The essence is to promote, and to accommodate the whole community, promoters of ideas of the people. The bottom-up approach is normally an avenue to inculcate and trigger the civic and voluntary limits (NGOs, CSOs), also to pull out economic and social interest groups and even the government and the private sectors (Experts/specialists/professional institutions, women and cultural organizations).

Bureaucracy and bottom-up approach to decision making

As classical as bureaucratic tenets are, the bulk idea of it and the administrative stint were never favourable to the development of the rural areas; rather, the praxis was an avenue for the exploitation and exportation of raw materials to buffer development at the homes of the colonial masters, observed Ikeji in Okereke (2023, p. 25). The arrangement is purely a top-down approach, welcoming no input from the rural dwellers in terms of policy/decision making. Marxist Scholars, Merton, Mayo, Blau, Schaffer and others posited that Weber's bureaucracy is an overt idealism foisted and promoted by colonial powers to better their lots at the expense of the rural colonies (Ikeji in Okereke, 2023, p. 23).

Further, Ikeji in Okereke (2003, p. 23) also sustained his argument and held further that, during the colonial regime and post colonial era, bureaucracy and bureaucrats were instruments designed to plunder their colonies (rural people) and not for either social or environmental transformation of the rural people. This is because; policies/decisions were strictly exclusive deliberations by the colonial masters only. As noted by David Abernethy (1971) and Adebayo (1979) in Ikeji and quoted in Okereke (2003, p. 26) bureaucracy and bureaucrats in Africa were basic ploy and tool to influence policy/decision making and implementation to have control of the available raw-materials which they deployed aboard, living the colonies (host countries) home and villages under developed.

The Weberian bureaucracy that was perceived as an overt idealism, was fashioned to school and brain-wash African bureaucrats (indirect rulers) to feel they are in authority whereas, they were not allowed to initiate any meaningful policy since they were not within the purview and realms of governance. They were rather perceived as subordinates who must take directives from other superior colonial masters. This bequeathed administrative practice is what is reflecting even in our present day civil service structures And rules of engagement, where only superior officers issue directives down the line of hierarchy called the chain of command. The above is purely a top-down approach which has caused scarcity and dearth in infrastructural amenities in the villages and other remote areas.

Development Plans and Rural Development in Nigeria

Development planes have been an integral part of development processes of any country's administration. It is the frame work by which infrastructural amenities are harnessed. Development planes or planning according to Okereke (2003, p. 35) is the act of setting development agenda over a period of time and how it could be attained. Planning from its entirely involves goal setting, the target and how it could be pursued and achieved. It is a futuristic venture, which needs time dimension to accomplish or achieve the set goals.



In a centrally planned economy, all the indices of development are captured and carried out by the top-down approach to policy/decision making, without the involvement of the rural people. Nigeria had gotten series of developmental plans with the baptismal name called first, second up to sixth National Development Plans from when she attained independence in 1960; spanning through a ten-year development agenda and welfare prospects (Okereke, 2003, pp. 35-38). These ideas were midwife and orchestrated by the colonial masters, which took-off in 1946 (Okereke 2003, p. 35). But, by 1970, just after the civil war, the second national plan (1970-74) was launched. Major ingredients in the plan were, basically, on restructuring after the civil war menace. Unfortunately, none of the plans accommodated the establishing of a planning office in the rural areas to incorporate the inputs of the rural populace. Although, the fifth national plan, proposed a panacea for a domestic production of raw- materials for local industries, these promises became mere wishes and a mirage that faded away, as the period to reap the planned goals, elapse and were not feasible. Normally, planning starts from the top (National Planning Commission or the ministry in charge of planning in Nigeria). But as observed by Ayo 1988 in Okereke, (2003) “there has always been a problem of inadequate planning capacity, particularly in the area of project identification, articulation and aggression in the federal ministries and corporation which have the responsibility and even the state and local government areas and their agencies” (pp. 45-46).

According to Okwudibia, (1998, p.189) cited in Okereke, (2003, p.48) stated that planning in Nigeria emanates from the top and ends at the top; from formulation, implementation to evaluation. In other words, no contribution is entertained from the rural people (no bottom-top approach). All are top-down approaches. Under this arrangement, the rural people do not have any major contribution for projects. Everything stops at the city and state capitals. Further to this claim, Ikeji in Okereke (2003, p.7) averred that, it is only by stroke of luck in most cases, that the rural people get projects under the aegis of corporate social responsibility; especially (for areas where natural resources are tapped for example in the Niger Delta regions where oil and gas are found and exploration activities are taking place). This is the only traditional means where the rural people get the interests, gains and dividends of development.

Top-down approach to project construction.

Normally, plans on how to attain development are done and midwife by “technocrats” at the top level concerning any projects. Internationally, this type of situation can occur in projects being carried out by the major financial sponsors or donor agencies like, the World Bank, the African Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or other types of global or regional donors, developed countries to less developed countries. Sometimes, the financial gestures are not necessarily given to less developed countries alone but even to some developed countries for support and to alleviate the suffering of a particular people in that country because of certain occurrences like natural disaster, war torn areas, or outbreak of epidemic (Shahidulla, 2020, p.94). This kind of approach to development is essentially noticed at the federal, state and local levels, especially when the central institution of the government in a developing country where the government institutions who are also the public bureaucrats are the major key players in decision making. Under the top-down approach of development, projects have very slim opportunities for the rural peoples’ participation in the formulation processes. The end result is normally a relegation of the locals or rural people to the bottom.



So, the top-down approach of administration/management is a system where decisions, designs and ideas come from the top management echelon to the subordinates in a hierarchical manner. Some may confuse top-down approach to be the same as down-up approach. The major difference between the two according to Simplelearn (2023) is the process is the point of take-off and its focus. While the top-down approach lay emphasis and prioritizes high level planning and decision making, bottom-up approach lay emphasis and prioritizes the need for execution of individual assigned tasks and the detailed knowledge to develop state. Simplelearn (2023) also noted that the top-up approaches have both advantages and disadvantages and they are thus:

Advantages

- * Easy to comprehend and put to work.
- * There are clear objectives with expected results.
- * It aligns with effective allocation of resources since budgets are made before execution

Disadvantages

- * It is a bit rigid to change
- * Difficult to access solutions
- * Missed opportunities or inefficiencies are possible
- * Subordinates' motivation and participation from lower level of employees are obvious and not encouraged.

The top-down approach is used by multi-national companies and conglomerates.

Applications of the top-down approaches are:

- * The company's management stems are structured thus: The chief executive officers (CEO) establishes a strategic plan action for the company and delegates the responsibilities to the units or department heads (managers) who also reassign the tasks to their down-line subordinates.
- * Secondly, there is usually a software development mechanism designed to create high-level designs that is further sub-divided into smaller tasks for their software engineers to work on. Government on its own hand, have always applied top-down approach of taking decisions before enunciating and establishing projects. In the government cycle, decisions are reached at the executive council meetings and are carried out by the commissioners who further direct the Permanent Secretaries. The decisions are further transmitted down to the directors and departmental heads for actions.

Consideration and desideratum for how monies and facilities will be expended and done are not brought before the beneficiaries of the projects (communities) by the government. It is always a one-way-decision-making-traffic-approach. And this is undemocratic. Some scholars or public affairs analysts may want to disagree with this that the commissioners represent different constituencies. But the truth remains that, they are handpicked party faithful that are not elected by the people. And so, their decisions may be parochial and personal, always not representing the views of everybody. Others may posit that approvals are gotten from the legislative arm of government. But project formation starts or emanates from the budgeting departments which also do not represent the views of the end-project-users. When this happens, it means that, some project that comes from the government may not be to the good of all.



When projects are instituted out of parochial and personal needs, the purpose for the general goods is impeached for the satisfaction of certain persons. And situating projects to favour a particular class of people could be a disservice to a whole nation like Nigeria. Obviously, influencing and padding on resource allocations and projects that benefit the decision makers, friends and acquaintances, directing resources to special projects and abuse of privileged information, are seen as administrative corruption (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018) and Graycar, 2015, p.89) as cited in Makbere (2022, p.44). In other words, wrongful diverting of public resources to unrealistic and unviable projects are tantamount to misappropriation and misuse of public funds, fraudulent, waste, which are found in the pockets of corruption according to Dorintinsky & Pradhan (2007, pp 267-294) in Okonjo-Iweala (2018) and Graycar, (2015, p.89).

Most projects citation arises due to the complexity of corrupt practices, while further complexity arises from tribal and ethnic chauvinism. These factors are all due to the top-down policies lapsing into lack of effective and adequate utilization and maintenance of project that were executed with so much billions of naira (Makbere, & Ifidi, 2024, pp.48-50) . If policy makers consider the poverty index of the population in Nigeria (Bayelsa State) which an average employee (in either the private or public sectors) who's earning per day is absolutely below \$1.90, they will legislate to float project that will instigate and alleviate the hard economic conditions of the people (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018)

Furthermore, the disadvantages experienced from top-down decision which makes government not to toe the reverse (down-top) is because of the kleptomania ruling elites, who have high capitalist tendency, perpetuated and taken undue advantage not to consider projects that will benefit the low-income earners. A case in point is the Bayelsa State palm farm company, which was expected to produce palm oil for the general populace, that is now been privatized to a single individual. This has robbed the common man from enjoying the natural resources and the wealth of Bayelsa state. The act of favoring some strata of people and leaving out the others create social barriers. Top-down approach encourages activities mostly from the upper class thereby causing social stratifications.

The argument here is that, lack of insight and poor execution of plans from government without input or due consideration of the down trodden people has cause sheer neglect in the people in making their inputs before executing certain projects. This has further caused deprivation of the common man and instead had promoted the elite project, which can never be used by the low-income earner any day (Makbere & Ifidi, 2024, p.38). Also, previous explanations have been preferred here, that common economic goods that the low-income earner patronages are facilities such as education, health, water, electricity, and goods with commercial values which can also be affordable and are available whenever they need it. So, top-down approach for instituting projects does not protect or have the interest of the poor masses.

Top-Down Approach and Population Growth

Nigeria population by the 2017 estimation is about 190 million, which makes it the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous in the world. One out of six Africans is a Nigerian. The country is projected to be the fifth largest country in the world by 2030 (with an estimated population of 204 million). According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, population division (2017) cited in Okonjo-Iweala (2018), Nigeria will be the third largest with an estimation of 410m population in 2050.

With the present population, 63 percent is under twenty-five years of age; and this constitutes the youth. This



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demography from the youth can be harnessed for dividend through proper planning that targets all, else, it can pose security threats, rough and tough unemployment and migration difficulties, noted Okonjo-Iweala in 2018. Noting these complexities arising from population surge which can further result to economic hardship, insecurity and other social embarrassment, any government making any decision must toe the down -upward approach before carrying out any project. To tinker alongside any group who is not within the ruling or average class, must be a must-consider venture, if they must succeed and to avoid some of the above innumerate socio-economic mis-normals. If the amenities that will be provided by government of the day does not incorporate those at the bottom, before doing anything, the common man will risk the chance of being inclusive and any plan that does not consider all the strata of people can't be seen as a true reflection of a real plan. Every plan must be encompassing and be good enough to accommodate everybody/group (Okereke, 2003, pp.4, 16).

On this note, there must be a paradigm shift of plans that are mainly to satisfy the 'elite' to that of the general public at least to strike a balance. It is not enough for any government to pay lip-services or make vain promises while on the soap-box, but must make decisions that will benefit all and sundry. Putting the facts succinctly, it demands that projects should have entrepreneurial prospect, rather than ones that are bias to favour a segment or strata of people. This type of approach (top-down) is seen as a territorial one (above all) according to Okereke, (2003, p. 16)

The Elite and the Top-bottom

No mention or attempt has been made to define or explain what or who the elites are, but simply put, they are the movers and shakers of any societies. They get anything they want no matter whose goads or horses it is in governance, else, heaven will let lose. They are seen as influencers of any policy or decision of government who must be considered before any decision will be reached. Mosca in Osi (2013, pp.134-138) posited the elites to mean those who influence government decisions and policies.

The top-down approach to decision making does not only exclude or neglect the down people before projects are instituted, but essentially, programmes that are designed to use or recycle money and to invest it on public works, social safety not divest to build infrastructure that will benefit the less privileged, less educated, unemployed men and women, and people with disabilities sometimes need executive fiat passage of bills provided it is for the good of all. Example of such is the suspension or the removal of subsidy for oil marketers with the aim of establishing the Subsidy Reinvestment Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) to invest or divest the economy, by using the huge amount of money that goes into the pockets or bank account of those involve in the racket, under the former president Goodluck Jonathan administration (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018, p.6). Top-down approach showcases the minority elite class successfully overthrowing the views of many dominant groups (Osi, 2013, p.135).

Therefore,, the consent of those at the bottom may not count provided the intent is good in their eyes. A case in reference is the motive of government which was decided upon to stop the oil subsidy and thereafter, the super-imposed selfish effects which were sponsored and driven by some elites who never wanted subsidy regime to come to an end, because of the benefits they derive, and their subsequent plot on how to thwart the effort of the government (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018, pp.5-7). When the elite develop interest on any public goods, they can decide to fight dirty with all amount of presumptuousness, even against instituted authorities. They can do



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everything within the reach of their high horse to dishonor legitimate decisions of government if the decisions are not favorable to them. Osi (2013, p. 136) presenting the argument of Michel puts it that, no matter what the majority will do, the elites dominate minority will always have their ways.

Modus Operandi of Bottom-Up Approach

The bottom-top approach is purely a local content approach where there are issues of social cohesion and good group work. Also decision-making are transparent and issues of feedback to evaluate her performances, are part of their agenda. Majorly, in bottom-up approach members do not dissociate itself from the issue of development. Here, key players engage in critical areas-based feats. Novel features of leaders approach are displayed. Most at times, in the bottom-up approach, the leadership initiates fund drives support programmes to sponsor her projects. Although, corrupt issues like embezzlement of funds meant for the project usually arise but it is also important to note that this accord encourages self-capacity building and technical support where experience becomes part of their gains, base on the interest of the project overtime. Individuals (as leaders) could introduce design and implement development programme that will benefit the community.

Different Levels of Participation in Developing a Programme

There are different levels at which every development programmes are carried out or implemented, and each has a stage. Each stage has a functional, commensurate and appropriate tools and methods used in encouraging local participation. A motion is set to await the right time to start, be it at the stage of development, decision-making or action time (implementation), which occurs at different levels with different people or group with different resources (Hodge, 2008).

However, the different levels of participation may appear in six different ways as shown in the diagram below:

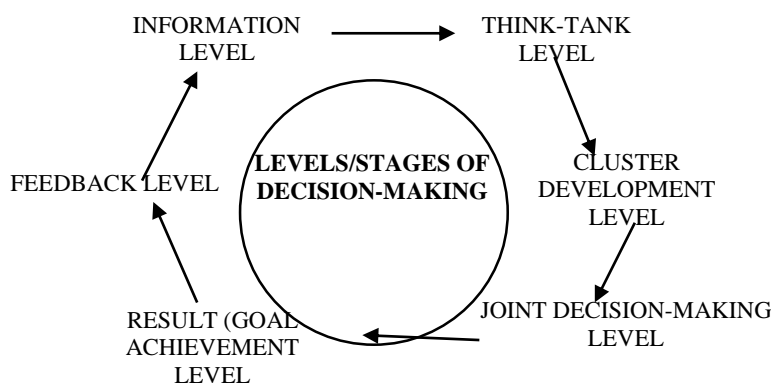


Fig.1. showing the six levels of action plan (by the researchers)

The diagram above shows the different stages/ levels and their different items to be used, the time, and those involved.

Informative Level

This is the information stage; at this level or stage, it involves the notification to the general public. The method to notify or inform the people about the subject matter to be discussed can be through the aid of

- (i) Calling for a town hall meeting



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- (ii) Through social media (Via SMS, WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, Flyers, Radio announcement or Banner). So many communities have “community social media group page” where community members are informed about the happening of the community. Decisions are however not taken on this platform, but decision taken can be posted on it for members to be aware.

The period (Time/when)

Under period, the time and when such decision which spelt out the type of programme, to embark on is determined.

Sub stages: who?

This spelt out those who had taken the decision. The entire villagers’ committee action group (CAG), partnership, project/ opinion leaders, institutions and decision – makers (Gargano, 2021, p.77)

Think-tank Level

Think-tank (consultation) level. Instruments frequently used under this think-tank or otherwise known as consultation forum are often period for screening, which is the official village examination, when (time) who (participants). This is the official village/ community examination of the quality of people and standard of what is to be done. It involves the assessment of those who will be capable of leading each group. For example, various committee Chairmen, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and those to drive financial support and other participatory groups e.t.c. It is also an avenue to discuss what is to be done (project). Under this; the period to take-off/commencement of the project is agreed upon with the strategy on how the plan action will be carried out (Cole & Kelly, 2011, p.216). Also, who to take or do particular assigned tasks from community action groups, interest groups are determined, formed or named at this stage.

The Cluster Development Level

The next stage after the think- tank or consultation stage is the cluster/ joint development. Under this, a synergy of how to pull the wealth of ideas on how best to accomplish the work (project), is harnessed. The instruments required here allows or demands the coming together of experts or specialist working in various area to pull their wealth of experience together, therefore forming partnership to train/ supervise workmen, volunteers and other local players. After the above comes “when” (that is the period/time) the project will be or is expected to be launched. This also indicates the time the programme will be implemented and then gives room for participatory self-assessment. Next under this, is the “who? The who here, like is explained above, means those community action groups-(that is the specialist) who have come together to form partnership, interest groups and concerned groups.

Joint decision-making level.

The joint decision-making level shouldn’t be confused with the think-thank level. Think-tank is the brainstorming level where ideas are traded with different experts while the joints decision-making (collective decision-making) is where issues are tackled, discussed or deliberated exhaustively and common grounds are accepted and arrived at a conclusion of what is agreed upon. The operational instruments here are the selected projects which have to be worked upon by all the parties involve (partnership). The period (when/time) is the actual time, the action and strategies on how to implement the programme, exploit new analytical areas based on the evaluation of the previous actions taken and then who does it? Here, as in other instances, it has to do with common members drawn from all the community action groups (partnership) project leaders.



Result (Goal Achievement) Level

At the completion of the various levels of activities and commencement of action plans, progress surely must be recorded. This recorded progress could translate to achievable goals of the entire cycle of which becomes the product of the decision taken. That has to do with unit assessments which evaluate to ascertain the levels of progress attained. Instruments required to achieve this depends on the various selected participatory group leaders; who see whatever they have invested into the projects. When/time/period to ascertain the result may arise at the point where significant impacts/levels have been achieved as can be observed by those who initiated the project. And those (who) do this are the community action group (CAG) leaders who represent different units or project leaders at different levels.

Feedback Level

The feedback level is a point where assessment/evaluation of the overall work is brought to the table to find out areas of non-achievement and non-performance as observed and recorded. It is a self-appraised mechanism where the people that make up of the leaders, evaluate the activities of the various units, partners, professionals and groups, if the impacts or inputs measured up the standard they once set. The instrument used here are the selected group leaders, experts, professionals who comes up under the auspices of partnership.

The period (when?) This is normally done during when the life time of the project has come to an end (finished point). Who does the feedback? This is solely in the hands of those in partnership, community action group (CAG) and project leaders.

General Overview of Intervention Agencies and how they operate

Here, the types and nature of projects are determined and decided by the community members, who are referred to as host communities. The only way the poor can feel a sense of belonging is when the government incorporate them to participate in decision making that has to do with developing the country. This encourages the bottom-top approach (MD- Sh Ahidulla, 2020, p. 98).

Interventionist Agencies

There have been so many interventionist agencies set up either by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union, US AID and other international agencies who often times collaborate with government of countries (central/regional) to help tackle global economic, health, weather and other social-political crises. These international agencies apart from the above also collaborate with either the central or regional government of a country to combat and manage most essential areas that are affected with natural disasters. When there is a social problem, natural disaster or an outbreak of epidemic, the international agencies, after being notified and investigations have been made, they establish intervention projects to assist bridge the gaps-either to mitigate the situation or work to restore leadership/administration of countries that have derailed/destroyed by civil war or other types of natural disaster.

Under this arrangement, the central government of that country through the ministry of budgetary, economic and planning or similar department forms a combine team which may comprise the regional and the donor agencies (be it IMF, World Bank or whichever). It is seen as the federal support unit/world bank, and state coordinating units. This can be in a tripartite arrangement. For instance, after the covid-19 pandemic, a body called Nigeria Covid-Action Recovery and Economic Stimulation (Ng-cares) was established. The reference is



to assist those who lost properties like livestock's and other types of business. They were given soft grants to ameliorate their plights and sufferings. Other years, after the creation of Bayelsa State from the old Rivers State in 1996, not fewer than seven (7) different types of interventionist agencies have been established.

They are:

Micro Project for Three (3) States – Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers State.	-	MP ₃
Local Environmental Empowerment Management Programme	-	LEEMP

FADAMA - This is actually a Hausa name which means an arable farm land after a flooding period normally suitable for planting. The government and other donors give soft loans to farmers to boost agricultural produces.

State Empowerment and Expenditure for Result	-	SEEFOR
Community and Social Development Agency	-	CSDA
Nigeria-Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulation	-	NG-CARES

The nature of their works has to do with ameliorating the suffering of people, especially those at the rural areas, and to encourage them develop their areas. This study has a particular reference which has to do with bottom-up approach to decision making. Still in focus, these interventionist agencies apart from trying to assuage or alleviate the problems of the rural dwellers. They also engage them in developing their environments/habitations.

Comparison between the village and the city.

Development with reference to infrastructure is mostly, seen in the cities and mega-cities with the presence of physical structures. According to Makbere & Ifidi, (2024, p.114) in citing the claims of Inogen Environment Alliance (2018), maintained that what makes a city is not the data showing the number of technologies, but how to secure quality life, to enable social life activities thrive. According to them a city is comprised of:

- ❖ The city and its emission and neighborhoods.
- ❖ Community and communication methods.
- ❖ A nexus, interconnections, and networks of roads.
- ❖ Innovation-which can be changed overtime.
- ❖ Recreational areas, urban spaces (green verges open/public areas).
- ❖ Buildings of different kinds, classes, locations (e.g. hybrid areas and low density areas).
- ❖ Smart development and transformation of existing buildings and their connotations.
- ❖ Transportation system
- ❖ Resource efficiency and how to reduce pollution
- ❖ Availability of Infrastructures (amenities) and modernization of her people through technology

Most of these yardsticks or criteria are measures found in the cities. But in contract to the above, Ebii (2000, p. 39) highlighted the rural setting as one which is depicted by a group of farm homes, clustering on parcel of land, apart from the fields of rural community which are marked for sporting and other social activities. This is shown with an outlook that resembles a cluster of grape-fruit or bee-hive which could take the shape of a “clustered” “compact”, or nucleated which are used interchangeably.

The shape of settlement varies from place to place, some are oblong, roughly squared, round or serpentine



(Ebii, 2000, p.39). Irrespective of how they are patterned, they lack basic infrastructural amenities like pipe-borne water, electricity, hospitals, quality educational facilities, communication and road networks, without proper planning which are common in the cities. They are often vulnerable to natural disasters. These couple with other factors has caused rural-urban-drifts. Ebii (2000,p.42) further observed that in some developing economies, the settlement pattern apart from their peasantry postures distant from cities and poverty, it has been difficult to provide rural installation, and cost of construction and materials required to serve an expanse of land has been worrisome because of the environment the locales found themselves.

The above prompted by nature, has made the rural dwellers go to search for socio-economic activities like Agro-industries, food productions and other economic activities to harness their administrative praxis based on their own understanding of governance (Ebii,2000,p.4). If the government can incorporate the effort of the above from communities, those activities can be sublime to feasible infrastructural development among the rural dwellers and their environment would change.

Welfare & the People

In their submission, Makbere & Ifidi (2024, p.117) posited that no state operates an absolute welfare state. That governance and government are formed on the platform of a blend of capitalism. That while there are other forms of government-semi-welfare, capitalist or communism, a state irrespective of the type of government they practice, would want to scale up development activities in the rural areas in order to fulfill the obligations of government and governance, to mitigate the suffering of the rural people, by providing some basic amenities.

These decisions are often taken at the central or the regional government which is top-down approach to decision making. An approach where decisions and policies are enacted from the policy/decision makers with a long chain before it gets down to the rural populace (Okafors & Nwatu 2008, p.79). But sometimes decisions are made by the rural people to provide for themselves and so with their own personal initiative, can come out with lofty ideas to see how they can achieve the objectives and attain the goal they set for themselves. For example, Ebii (2000, p. 39) quoting Postan, (1972) noted that, most communities took the decision of setting up wall cities base on the need for mutual defense to protect their subjects/wards and family members from the menace of slave raiders or other forms of attacks. Modern planning has changed this narrative.

The Cluster Group/Partnership

It became necessary and imperative for the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Nigeria and its joint ventures to maintain and extend its corporate social business responsibilities to their host communities to avoid agitations. Oil exploitation and exploration activities started in 1956, but the people had nothing to show as the principle of derivation suddenly became ineffective despite it was judiciously followed when cash-crops were the economic sources of revenue in the Pre/post Nigeria Independence. Ambily Etekpe (2007, p.9) noted that politics of resource allocation became a contentious issue in Nigeria in 1970 as oil and gas became the life wire of the economy of the country. This ill-fated contentious issue on the principles of derivation coupled with neglect to develop the Niger Delta Area snowballed to various pockets of agitations and their splinter groups. The orchestrated agitations led to different phases of declarations that graduated into insurgency and pogrom by various agitators such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Volunteers (NDV), among others, (Makbere & Ifidi, 2024, p.115, Ibaba, 2017,p.1 and Ibaba & Ikelegbe, 2009).



One of the gains of these agitations which produced a budding and resonance effect according to Ibaba (2017,p.34) cited in Makbere & Ifidi (2024, p.116) was the establishment of ministries and extra-ministerial agencies among which are the Oil Mineral Producing Area Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) in 2000. This was to be able to manage the meager 1.5 percent mineral-producing area development fund. This activity however, did not deter the SPDC and its joint ventures company from dealing with the host communities.

According to the Environnews Nigeria (24thMay, 2023) the SPDC had had dealings with Host Community Development Trusts 60yrs ago-with a cluster arrangement. This is a platform where all oil-bearing communities are brought together and put in different clusters according to their state of origin, local government areas, wards and communities. Environnews Nigeria further explained that this arrangement is in compliance with the new template provided by the Petroleum Industry Act, (PIA), 2021. The idea of the PIA is to enable the host communities (under the cluster arrangement) come up/initiate projects which will be sponsored by the joint venture in collaboration with the Nigeria Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPERC), whose duty is to approve and recognize host communities.

The Use of GMoU and Cluster Groups

One of the instruments used by the SPDC and its joint ventures which have helped the smooth executive of her operations with the oil-bearing communities is the Global Memorandum of Understanding (GMoU). This document is an agreement between the host communities (which forms the cluster groups) and the SPDC and its ventures, to help develop the rural areas. Under this arrangement, the host communities under the cluster groups, through the Board of Management Team that serves as a Trust Team, has the mandate of her people (communities) to initiate project of their choice which are sponsored by the SPDC. The overall aim is to boost rural infrastructural development.

In their findings, Ominikari and Elohor (2021) stated that, though SPDC had overtimes, ventured to make a cluster (host communities) funding for rural projects initiated by the host communities, that the funding and the projects may be inconsistent, but that the interventions are meant to empower the rural people to boost human capacity (empowerment of small and medium scale business men/women) entrepreneurially.

Most at times, the GMoU helps to show the agreement between the host communities and the SPDC, the intended projects as initiated and determined what to do, who to do it, how it will be done and when to do it? This is the spirit of the bottom-up approach to decision making which has brought some levels of infrastructural development in the rural areas. This approach (bottom-up) as an alternative strategy may have doused down and on a long-run affected and resolved the perennial agitations, insurgencies, and counter-insurgencies in the Niger Delta Region, observed Etekpe, (2007, p.10).

Evaluating SPDC and Its Cluster Beneficiaries

This study is not in any way an appraisal for SPDC, but a means to ascertain the extent at which the bottom-up approach through cluster arrangement is organized courtesy of the SPDC GMoU and how this has affected and enhanced rural development among oil bearing communities which constitute the rural population. Again, the bulk idea is to show case the effectiveness of down-up approach to development.



According to Shell Petroleum Development Company, through its investment panacea for development to host communities, have from 2011 signed and implemented agreements with 27 clusters, covering 290 communities, close to 30% of the local communities around its business operations in the delta region. It also noted that, in 2011, a total of 596 projects were completely executed through the GMoU (this according to the report, it includes pre GMoU projects). This shows a total value of \$79million provided for funding & the projects. Among the 27 clusters, nine (9) Cluster Development Board (CDBs) were registered and elevated to be foundations, which received third party funding.

Success Stories (Scholarships/Education)

In other clusters, particularly in Rivers State, scholarships were given to about 7,392 to SPDC host communities, including 21 scholarships to study in universities in the UK. Other affected areas which the GMoU addressed are community health, agriculture, energy for the environment etc. The success story lines have also favoured those cluster groups in Bayelsa State, Delta State, and other oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta. To reiterate further, this study is not in any way to malign, vindicate or appraise the SPDC and its allied companies, but to determine how effective and useful the idea of bottom-up approach to decision making through the cluster arrangement have enhance development in the rural areas-different from the cities where “elite projects have been situated”.

Theoretical Exposition

This study considered among other theories that are touched by way of citing the system’s theory and the Home rule theory. First, as a theoretical construct, the system theory which was first enunciated by the proponents of the classical theorists highlighted the essence of the whole units or departments, sub-set systems which makes up the whole parts to function together. The emphasis is that, if a subset is not functional, there is a dislocation of the entire system. Again, that the non-functioning of a part of the entire system affects the other parts; which renders the whole-body dysfunctional.

If the central government, regional (states) work without the local government areas, especially in a federal system of government where there are other component units, then development will be scarce. But a solution where all the component units are functioning maximally, development will evenly spread. If the local government areas are not given the autonomy to carry out its constitutional duties, due to unnecessary control and political interference from the political elites, then what would have been done (projects) at the local and rural levels will be denied, and that will make the local government and the rural people non-functional and ineffective. Another name of systems theory is functional theory.

The home rule theory has to be smuggled into this study alongside the system’s theory because of its belief, contribution and the proposition it holds for the local and rural stint in administration. The home rule according to Njoku (2009, pp.32-34) are largely patronized in USA and India; but was first used in the state of Missouri, United State of America in 1875. According to the theory, it is a situation where the state legislature allows the municipalities a measure of self-governance- rule.

According to Nicholas (1999, 386) cited in Njoku (2009, p.32) highlighted the views of major proponents of the home rule theory as Mary Jane Turner, Kenneth Switzer and Charlotte Reddam, who maintained that the home rule charter allows the people of an area the degree of scrutinize levels to have the responsibility, to regulate, mobilize and utilize their resource to their own advantage. This means a total democratic



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decentralization where the people have adequate representative, people initiative, distribution and expenditure of resources in conformity to their local area suigeneris from others.

In trying to bring the system's theory and the home rule theory together, it is important to note that, the system's theory emphasizes on the need for all the units or component parts to function together, else, the "whole" (country) will be affected in term of administration. Nigeria as a big political entity (State) with many functional and component parts (federated units) is a whole system where all the parts need to work in synergy to avoid "clog" in the administration of duties in order for it to be effective, efficient and to enhance development.

In the same vein, all the units need to be given the enablement to function without any impediment of any kind, and to encourage freedom of administrative praxis. This is the position of the home rule theory. For all the component units (which is part of the system) function maximally, effectively and efficiently, there must be room for them to able to coordinate and harness their resources adequately to enhance rural development. This can be done by seeing the rural people as fourth-tier structure of governance. One of the basic reasons why projects (enunciated) from the top are not sustained is because of (i) remoteness and proximity, where the people do not see the project as their own, (ii) hostility from host communities to contractor. But when projects are initiated from the bottom (local levels), the people sees the project as their own and began to protect it.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a qualitative approach. This design enabled the researchers to gain different perspectives and draw attention to different factors affecting developmental projects in Bayelsa State through the use of primary and secondary methods of data collection. The primary source comprised data from interview with the 14 inhabitants of the various communities and personal observation as a citizen of Bayelsa State. However, secondary sources of data include materials from the Internet, textbooks, publications, government documents, journals and conference/seminar papers. The study employed content and thematic analysis in analysing the secondary data collated for the study.

Setting

The place where this article considers as a study area, is Bayelsa state in the Niger Delta area, South – South region of Nigeria, and nearby states which has a touch of the intervention agencies activities carried out by the SPDC and other development agencies to enhance physical development.

Discussions

This section is devoted to discussing communities affected by the effects of the Nigeria Covid 19 Actions for Response and Economic stimulations (NG-CARES), Shell Petroleum Development Company and the cluster communities who are under the global memorandum of understanding (GMOU) and have benefited from the projects initiated by them (host communities) the extent to which the communities have been transformed in terms of infrastructural amenities. The major and the only aim of this research is to investigate the purpose of how projects initiated by the communities in form of decisions are sent to SPDC, NG-CARES, LEEMP, SEEFOR etc for approval and there after the implementation. The research question is how has decisions that emanates from the rural people (communities) in terms of project initiation to enhance the infrastructural



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development in the rural areas?

Observation

From the investigations, a total of 290 communities covering 27 clusters showing 30% sent proposals for project ranging from small and medium scale businesses (asking for soft loans or grants) constructing of feeders roads, landed jetty, agricultural produces (live stocks) market stalls, town halls, scholarship schemes, bore holes, public toilets (conveniences) rural electrifications, class-room blocks etc. The above mentioned are projects enlisted under the SPDC's GMoU with oil bearing communities in the delta region in 2011. And those referenced as what could be done by the institutions like the NG-CARES,

SEEFOR, FADAMA, Community and Social Development Agency and other donor bodies can sponsor financially to help boost infrastructural amenities in the rural areas. For NG-CARES, like other intervention agencies provide fund, monitor, supervise and ensures that micro projects initiated by communities selected from all the local government areas of Bayelsa State are implemented and finished or completed.

From its inception in 2019 the NIG-CARES in conjunction with the donor agencies like the World Bank, had sponsored over 500 micro projects. The projects range from walkway roads, lodges for young graduates who are on national call to serve their nation (Youth Corps) mini-water projects, market stalls, public toilets, school furniture, quarters for health staff, classroom blocks, quarters for teachers, renovation of health centers, and so on. According to a senior officer of the agency who claimed anonymity, says all project were finished and completed. These projects were all initiated by the communities' leaders who constitute a seven man committee with a woman as the treasurer.

According to the spoke's persons, communities who delay or have issues in starting an approved project are made to refund the approved sum to the agency. This method of check has made them achieved 100% success of project completion. The success story is not possible without the able hands and the assistance of the community leaders who forms part of the monitoring team (See pp. 16 – 18).

Summary

The research on bottom-top approach and effectiveness of rural development projects in Bayelsa State was instigated by the previous research on re-activating abandoned projects for sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Bayelsa State. One of the problems that were figured that led to abandoning of projects is the nature by which they are established (Makbere & Ifidi, 2024, 9.16). The mode of establishment is borne out of the fact that, most projects are sponsored by the elites which are not for the common man or low income earners who cannot afford those projects. These projects after suffering low patronages cannot be maintained and sustained overtime, because of the parochial motive for establishing such projects, which does not have the people's consideration (down-top approach) the project on a long run suffers neglect.

The study was concluded using the content approach, albeit, with some quantitative colorations approach. The systems and home rule theory were adopted.

Findings:

1. It was gathered that most gigantic projects initiated by politicians (top-down approach) are biased on usage and does not in any way improve the life of the rural people. Such projects overtime are abandoned because of a turn-over which are supposed to be a support for turn-around maintenance.



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2. Corrupt tendencies are ruled out when projects are community based (that is initiated by the people, down-up approach)
3. The people see such projects as their own pet projects, hence, give utmost care and protect the projects.
4. Craftsmanship makes them own and protect the projects against vandals and stealing

Conclusion and Recommendations

According to Makbere and Ifidi (2024, p. 137), development has so many phases and aspects. That apart from the human capacity dimensions of development, environmental development is also important and that most projects that are instituted are from the high echelon politicians which are very scanty and are only established in the urban areas. This has caused rural-urban drift which has further resulted to shortage of social amenities and over population of the urban areas.

And not everybody can afford to be in the city, so, those that will be in rural areas must also have some touch of essential amenities such as portable water, health facilities, electricity, quality education, roads e.t.c. These projects, if initiated by the rural people, stand the test of time and affect all and sundry. For this, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. To see the rural grouping other than the local government administration as a fourth tier of government in terms of rural projects.
2. Government should give more attention to decisions made by the rural people (bottom-up approach) in terms of establishing any projects, both in the cities and in the rural areas.
3. That even though decisions of instituting projects may come from the government (top-down approach) it should consider to incorporate and consult the rural people for their inputs.
4. The rural people should be allowed some degree of autonomy, where the home rule policy/law should be encouraged.

Acknowledgement:

We like to most profoundly thank and appreciate the Executive Secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and its management for their wonderful support for funding this research which has added to the dexterity of our research skills.

Also, we appreciate the provost of the Isaac Jasper Boro College of Education Sagbama and his team who considered enlisting us to be among this batch of researchers. We also extend this appreciation to the management and staff of Adaloy Computers for a good work. Well done!

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