RURAL-COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA; A GROUP DYNAMICS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT
In Nigeria, the philosophy of people's participation in rural community development is increasingly gaining acceptance as an important instrument for mobilising resources and organising the rural populace to have cogent interests in providing for their wellbeing. Government at various strata such as the federal, state and local government have come to terms with the fact that there is an inherent imperative in “the traditional democratic theory”, which advocates rural populace active participation in the Decision-making and implementation of policies that affect and shape their lives. In view of this recognition of the impetus of people’s participation, successive governments' proposals for rural community development contain various forms of statements and commitments aimed at maximising people’s participation in ensuring their general wellbeing. In this light, this paper seeks to review the various self-help approaches to rural community development in Nigeria, with vivid emphasis on its group dynamism, which also serve as the thrust of this paper.

Keywords: Self-Help, Rural Community Development, Community, Felt Need, Traditional Democracy.

INTRODUCTION
The idea of self-help is one of several distinguishing features of rural community development theory, practice and ideology. It is based on the premise that people can, will and should collaborate to solve community problems. In addition to the practical problem-solving utility of this perspective, self-help builds a strong sense of community and a foundation for future collaboration. It embodies the notion that a community can achieve greater self-determination within constraints imposed by the larger political economy in which it is imbedded.

In community development practice, it is rudimentary that the solution to community problems is sought first within the community and its resources and capabilities. Hence self-help embodies two interrelated features: (1) it is expected to produce improvements of people's living conditions, facilities, and/or services; and (2) it emphasizes that the process by which these improvements are achieved is essential to the development of the community. Willy-nilly, the “community” is both improved and empowered as a result (Christenson & Robison, 1989).
The importance of community development in contemporary Nigerian society cannot be overemphasized, as much as it cannot be relegated to the background; as its significance stems from its recognised role in the process of achieving the improvement of economic, political, social and cultural conditions of the communities. As a strategy, community development ensures rapid national development hence Ugwu’s (2009) assertion “community development is one of the major planks upon which National developmental policies and their implementation are hinged”.

This is why the group dynamic perspective of rural community development becomes imperative especially as issues in rural community development with special emphasis on self-help approach tend to rely on the “felt need theory” and the traditional democratic theory”. These theories are indicative of the place of people’s participation in the development of the rural populace. Hence the search by development theories over the years for alternative strategies that would not only accelerate growth but also spread the benefits of development to the rural areas, the distortion of Nigeria’s development pattern as decried by Aboyade (1980) when he wrote about the profound dualism between the urban and rural areas and the proportionate costs and consequences of rural infrastructural lagging behind urban modernism.

Consequently, some eighty percent of the population in rural areas either had no medical services or made do with rudimentary facilities scattered over wide distances (Onimode, 1982). This obvious neglect of the rural majority of Nigerians in the developmental scheme of things, is an indictment of both colonial and independent governments not only for neglecting the majority who live in the rural areas but also for “milking them dry” for the benefits of the British metropolis and the urban minority in Nigeria.

Contemporarily, rural community development has become a national imperative in Nigeria and the following are the reason. Firstly, the proportion of the national population resident in the rural areas of Nigeria is higher hence the 1963 census, which place the figure at 80.7% of the national population. By 1985, this proportion went down to 70.13% and by 1990; it further dropped to 69%. It is therefore clear that despite our high level of urbanization, Nigeria remains largely rural. Secondly, is the realization that a dangerous gap exists in the development levels of both the urban and rural areas which threatens the political and social stability of the country. Hence the development of a country cannot be completed with the singular act of developing the urban areas at the detriment of the rural area which supplies the urban areas with food and labour. Disheartening as it may sound and seem, the rural areas are characterized by pervasive and endemic poverty, made manifest by widespread hunger, malnutrition, poor health, general lack of access to formal education, liveable housing and various forms of social and political solution compared with their urban counterparts. Thirdly, it is being recognized that the problems of our urban centres cannot be solved unless those of the rural areas are solved, or at least contained. Hence these problems emanated from the unprecedented rural-urban migration which in turn derives from rural area underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment (Akpomuvie, 2010).

Despite the efforts made in the past to effect development at the rural areas, the conditions of the rural dwellers have not improved, rather they have further deteriorated. It is against this background that this paper examines “the group dynamisms of Nigerian rural community development".
CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE.

The choice of the topic- rural-community development; instead of “rural development”, “community development” and/or “rural and community development” is based on the observed misconceptualization of the concepts involved such as rural, community and development. In the literature, scholars have used rural development and community development interchangeable. Some of them have even succeeded in pinpointing one or two attributes to distinguish them. Such attributes as the involvement of external forces in the execution of the project that is aimed at enhancing the development of such area. Others talked about the funding of the project as well as the initiation of the project. For us, this aspect dwells in the realm of approaches to community development.

Semantically, the term “rural” is an adjective that precedes a noun; Nouns such as a place, a person or a thing. Therefore such nouns should be society, community, economy, dwellers, people, areas, environment etc. it is strictly compared to the antonym, urban. Rural and urban are two broad categorisation of a society. Such as urban societies; rural societies, urban dwellers; rural dwellers, urban communities; rural communities, et cetera.

The term ‘development’ is an adverb that gives more information about a thing, place, person an even an adjective. Thus, the adverb (development) gives more information about the adjective (rural). Essentially therefore, rural development as a concept is colloquially used in development literature as it is simply a combination of adverb and adjective- both, seeking to describe and give more information about a noun (community, area, people, dwellers, environment, society, etc). Explicatively, our choice of the concept of rural-community development is to capture the real meaning of the entire concepts. Therefore, we seek to assert that most, if not all definitions of and talks on rural or community development is actually talking about “rural-community development”. This is premised on the assumption that development does not occur in a vacuum but in a place. That place (community) is the noun that the adjective (rural) seeks to describe and the adverb (development) gives more information about.

An understanding of the concept of development however, will give a clearer picture of rural community development. Therefore its conceptualisation suffices as Hornby (2000), defines development as the gradual growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, etc. This definition implies that development involves a gradual or advancement through progressive changes. changes, which Umehali (2006) saw as multi-dimensional involving changes in structures, attitude and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth; the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. He further asserts that development involves economic growth component, equality or social justice component, and socio-economic transformational component which are all on a self sustaining basis. Viewing the concept differently, Simon (2004) sees it as an improvement in quality of life (not just material standard of living) in both quantitative terms. He further opines that development must be seen as actually and temporally relative, needing to be appropriated to time, space, society, and culture.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that rural-community development is not a one-off thing or an immediate and snap phenomenon. Rather, it is gradual and progressive towards perfection.
having a set standard in mind. No wonder some scholars and writers referred to it as a process.

To conceptualise the concept of rural-community development, the characteristics of a rural area will suffice alongside variety of definitions of community development from renowned scholars and institutions, which will be compared with the various definitions of the misconstrued concept of rural development.

Outlining the characteristics of a rural area, Ekekpe and Ekpe (2009) averred ‘whether you are in the northern part of the country or in the southern part, you will be struck by the very level of abject poverty; mass illiteracy; unsanitized environment; lack of clean water supply; lack of access roads; unavailability of health care facilities; improper and inadequate housing; poor lighting particular at night; large family sizes; small income; defeatist/fatalist attitude; small land parcel ownership; out-moded ineffective farming implement etc. these conditions discourage the educated young persons from remaining in the rural areas. The result is unchecked rural-urban migration, thus further depleting from the rural areas, the human potential resources for development.

In line with the above characteristics of rural development, scholars have defined rural development variedly. For instance, Obinne (1991) perceived it as involving creating and widening opportunities for (rural) individuals to realize full potential through education and share in decision and action which affect their lives. He further views it as efforts to increase rural output and create employment opportunities and root out fundamental or extreme cases of poverty, diseases and ignorance.

Others like Olayide, Oguntowora, Essang and Idacha (1981) view it as means for the provision of basic amenities, infrastructure, improved agriculture productivity and extension services and employment generation for rural dwellers. Hence, Olayide et al (1981) see it as a process whereby concerted efforts are made in order to facilitate significant increase in rural resources productivity with the central objective of enhancing rural income and creating employment opportunity in rural communities for rural dwellers to remain in the area. It is also an integrated approach to food production, provision of physical, social and institutional infrastructures with an ultimate goal of bringing about good healthcare delivery system, affordable and quality education, improved and sustainable agriculture etc.

From several quarters, the call that rural development needs to be given priority attention have come. Several reasons for such urgency such as high and unacceptable rate of poverty, poor access to social and economic infrastructure and services such as access to safe drinking water supply and sanitation, higher rate of health indicator such as infant mortality rate, malnutrition and disease prevalence and lower enrolment of children in school has been cited.
In terms of measuring rural development, Obot (1987) suggests that it could be measured in the areas of roads, water supply, housing, electricity, building of model communities, access to quality education, improved health care delivery and availability of food and agricultural products for the rural settlers. Hence, the objective of the National Policy on Rural Development as outlined by Ogbazi (1992) encapsulated the ideal situation of an acceptable level of development in the rural area. These objectives can be paraphrased to include:

- Promotion of the social, cultural, educational and economic well being of the rural population
- Promotion of sustained and orderly development of the vast resources in the rural areas for the benefit of the rural people,
- Increase in and diversification of job opportunities and improvement of income in the rural areas,
- Mobilization of the rural population for self-help and self-sustaining programme of development, and
- Up-lifting of the technological based industries in the rural area.

Unlike the misconceptualisation in ‘rural development, community development combines the idea of “community” with “development” hence the concept of Community plus Development. The concept of community has been described as a group of people with a shared identity. Hence, community development relies on interaction between people and joint action, rather than individual activity – what some sociologists call “collective agency” (Flora and Flora, 1993).

As an individual word, “development” is a process that increases choices, heralding new options, diversification, thinking about apparent issues differently and anticipating change (Christenson et.al., 1989). Development involves change, improvement and vitality; a directed attempt to improve participation, flexibility, equity, attitudes, the function of institutions and the quality of life. It is the creation of wealth – wealth meaning the things people value, not just dollars (Shaffer, 1989). It leads to a net addition to community assets, avoiding the “zero sum” situation where a job created “here”, is a job lost “there”.

Putting the two terms together, community development; means that a community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the community. The community is both the means and the end of community development. The community itself takes action and participates together. It is through this action that the community becomes more vital, not just economically but as a strong functioning community in itself.

Suffice it to say that in this context, these communities are connoted with the afore-mentioned and adumbrated characteristics of rural areas, equilibrating our concept of ‘rural community development’. We are however, not alone in this conceptualisation, as Chukwuezi (2000:33) and Cavaye (2000) had lent their supports when they wrote that all rural development are in fact, community development.

Historically, the notion of community development owes a great deal to the efforts of colonial administrators. Hence after the Second World War the British Colonial Office became concerned with ‘community development’. Mayo (1975: 130) suggests that administrators ‘concocted’ the term out of their attempts to develop ‘basic education’ and social welfare in the UK colonies. For example, a 1944 report, Mass education in the colonies, placed an
emphasis on literacy training and advocated the promotion of agriculture, health and other social services through local self help (Midgley et al 1986: 17). This was a set of concerns similar to those surrounding the interest in rural development and educational 'extension' in North America in the first two decades of the century. Community development was defined in one UK government publication as:

active participation, and if possible on the initiative of the community,
but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to achieve its active and enthusiastic response to the movement. (Colonial Office 1958: 2)

The concern with community development was, in part, a response to the growth of nationalism, and, in part an outcome of a desire to increase the rate of industrial and economic development. The notion began to feature strongly in United Nations documents during the 1950s - and these drew extensively on the British literature and experiences in Africa and India (Midgley et al 1986: 18). Three important elements were identified:

• a concern with social and economic development.
• the fostering and capacity of local co-operation and self-help.
• the use of expertise and methods drawn from outside the local community.

Within this spectrum, there does appear to be a certain contradiction hence community development emphasizes participation, initiative and self help by local communities but is usually sponsored by national governments as part of a national plan. While from one side it can be seen as the encouragement of local initiative and decision making, from the other it is a means of implementing and expediting national policies at the local level and is a substitute for, or the beginning of, local government (Jones 1977).

These contradictions are what prompted Okoli (1985) to assert “there have been various concepts of community development based on ideological orientation and the key concepts have not been well explicated and operationalized”.

Among the British Colonial Office, community development meant

A movement to promote better living for the whole community, with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming, by the use of technique for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the development. It includes the whole range of development activities in the districts, whether they are undertaken by government or unofficial bodies (1985).

The International Co-operation Administration sees it as

A process of social actions in which the people of a community organise themselves for planning and action and the individual plans with a maximum reliance upon community resources and supplemented these resources when necessary with services and materials from government and non-governmental agencies outside the community.
The United Nation in its concept of community development sees it thus:

The term community development designates the utilization under one single programme of approach and technique, which relies upon local communities as units of action and which attempts to combine outside assistance with organised local self determination and effort and which correspondingly seeks to stimulate local initiative and leadership as the primary instrument of change (United Nations, 1971)

In African countries and in the economically underdeveloped areas, major emphasis is placed upon those activities which aim at promoting the improvement of the basic living conditions of the community, including the satisfaction of some of its non-material needs.

The incongruence in the varied definitions of community development led it to facing another approach, as it was realised that the early approaches or processes could not guarantee material well being of the communities.

Later writers, especially African writers started seeing community development as coterminous with rural development (Mbiti, 1972, Ebong, 1973 and Chukwuezi, 2000). This approach was informed by the fact that much of the African programmes on community development were really concerned with the rural societies. However, rural development is not coterminous with community development. There are quite some differences bearing in mind the socio-cultural environment. But one must add that all forms of rural development is community development, but not all forms of community development is rural development (Chukwuezi, 2000).

This is why, Cavaye (2000), supporting our claim, uphold:

Rural community development is a process conducted by community members. It is a process where local people can not only create more jobs, income and infrastructure, but also help their community become fundamentally better able to manage change.

The “concrete” benefits of community development, such as employment and infrastructure, come through local people changing attitudes, mobilising existing skills, improving networks, thinking differently about problems, and using community assets in new ways. Community development improves the situation of a community, not just economically, but also as a strong functioning community in itself.

Rural community development builds the five capitals of a community – physical, financial, human, social and environmental. It is through participation in their community that people rethink problems and expand contacts and networks; building social capital. They learn new skills, building human capital. They develop new economic options, building physical and financial capital. They also can improve their environment.

Fundamentally, Community development includes all strategies, interventions or coordinated activities at the community level aimed at bringing about social and economic development. It essentially, improves the ability of communities to collectively make better decisions about the use of resources such as infrastructure, labour and knowledge. The key elements of
community development are expressed to varying degrees in many definitions. Some key descriptions are as follows:

- For community development to occur, people in a community must believe working together can make a difference and organise to address their shared needs collectively (Flora et. al. 1992).
- Community development is a group of people in a community reaching a decision to initiate a social action process to change their economic, social, cultural and environmental situation (Christenson et. Al, 1989).
- Community development is a process that increases choices. It creates an environment where people can exercise their full potential to lead productive, creative lives (Ron Shaffer 1990).
- Community development is a process where people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and communities are integrated into the life of the nation enabling them to contribute fully to national progress. – (United Nations, from Biggs, 1999)
- Community capacity is the combined influence of a community’s commitment, resources and skills that can be deployed to build on community strengths and address community problems and opportunities – (Aspen Institute, 2000).
- Community economic development is about identifying and harnessing local community resources and opportunities and stimulating sustainable economic and employment activity (Kenyon, 1994).
- Sanders (1958) saw community development as a process moving from stage to stage; a method of working towards a goal; a program of procedures and as a movement sweeping people up in emotion and belief.

Often communities are developed by people outside of the community that bring in resources without taking into account the community itself. Participatory Rural Community Development is committed to listening to the community residents, and hearing their dreams, ideas and thoughts. This is often referred to as the felt-need concept. Listening is most important, as the people of the community are the vested treasures of the future.

It is important not to focus on the weaknesses or needs of a community. The felt-need concept helps community developers to focus on the desires of the community residents. The priority is the thoughts and dreams of the community itself. What the people themselves believe should be the focus. Asset-based community development focuses on the assets of a community and building upon them. When fused together through Christian Community Development, they can have extremely positive results.

This theory of rural community development is significantly related to the traditional democratic theory of development and self-help approach of rural community development. This is why we lay emphasis on self-help approach to rural community development.
WHAT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IS NOT
We have discussed the components, principles and processes of community development. Final clarification comes from describing what community development is not.

**It isn’t service delivery:** Rural people are clearly demanding greater service delivery from both government and the private sector. Clearly, providers should give the best service possible. Yet community development is more than delivering services. Delivering what “clients” perceive they need does little to stimulate the “rethinking”, social networks or leadership that builds the ability of communities to manage change.

**It isn’t social work or welfare:** In a community development process, many communities may aim to improve the situation of the unemployed, ill, disabled or poor, strengthen social interaction, or improve social support services. However, community development is not a social welfare program. It is a self-directed process aimed at a broad range of economic, social and environmental community benefits.

**It isn’t a “feel good” exercise:** Community development produces real “bricks and mortar” and “dollars and cents” outcomes. It achieves this through cooperative action, rethinking and organisation. But it involves a lot of action and work. It is far more than a morale boosting exercise (Caraye, 2000).

EVOLUTION OF RURAL-COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA
That community participation in rural project development is an important element and a sure way to the speedy development of the rural areas in Nigeria is well attested to in development literature hence Okafor, (1984); Udoye, (1986) ; Muoqhalu, (1986) and (1987). The need to develop the rural areas and to a large extent, reduce the contrasting scenario of urban opulence and rural decadence has equally received ample documentation in literature (Hansen and Schulz, 1981).

The evolution of the practice of self-help development activities has the following periodic dimensions; the pre-colonial, the colonial up to 1939, the period from 1940 to the Nigerian Civil War, the civil war years and the post civil war years to the present democratic settings. Before the onset of colonial administration, communities across Nigeria had employed communal efforts as the mechanism for mobilizing community resources to provide physical improvement and functional facilities in the social, political and economic aspects of their lives. Communal labour was employed in constructing homesteads, clearing farm lands, roads or path way, construction of bridges and for the provision of other social infrastructural facilities required by the people. Some of the relevant institutions were the age-grades and the village councils. Though some of these institutions have persisted, the difference between self-help activities undertaken in the past and those prosecuted today are not hard to find, hence the widening and complexing modern society and its complex web.

Perceptibly, differences exist in the mode and scope of the operations, equipment utilized and the extent of government involvement. As Idode (1989) observed, in the past, self help efforts in Nigeria particularly in Bendel State now Edo and Delta States mainly related to the construction of footpaths or roads, dredging of rivers and streams, clearing of public land and market places. Later, Idode further observed, the scope of operation included the building of schools and market stalls. Projects such as pipe-borne water, road tarring, dispensaries, and cottage hospitals and so on, were not usually attempted. Furthermore equipment used was simple; hoes, cutlasses, diggers and shovels were generally utilized. The construction of walls did not follow any standard measurements as the people used their imagination to plan and construct such projects. At this stage, there was little or no government involvement as the
planning and execution of these self-help projects was the sole responsibility of the people. Where the government was involved at all, was for the purposes of taking over completed projects for operation or maintenance. But where neither the state government nor the local government councils were interested in such project, the missionaries took over.

During the colonial period, community development efforts took a compulsive and coercive turn. The alien governmental apparatus with its clientele (Warrant Chief) arrangement, extorted taxes and compulsory labour from the people. Taxation by itself questioned the rationality of further labour conscription for road and other infrastructural development at the instance of the District Commissioner. The contradictions in the new development effort, therefore, did not fire the corporate imagination of the people and this was given expression by the tax debacle of 1929, popularly known as the Aba women riot. It question the whole essence of the tax laws as established then, the imposition of the Roads and River Ordinance and the apparent shirking of development responsibility by a government that had already extorted taxes for this purpose.

Apart from the establishment of governmental exploitative infrastructural apparatus, linking the major seats of government through forced labour, no serious self-help programmes eliciting popular participation was encouraged. Any development that occurred was a by-product of profit (Hancock, 1942). Nonetheless at very local levels, the family, interfamily and village settings, the pre-colonial trappings of mutual assistance through self-help persisted for the construction of homesteads, clearing farmlands, clearing water points and for providing other socially felt needs. Church organizations were also able to cooperate with members for the building of schools. By the late 1940’s however, an element of modern community concept in rural development was introduced in the form of mass mobilization for self-help activities. This was heralded by the abrogation in Britain of the Colonial Development Act which was replaced by the Development and Welfare Act in 1939. As rightly noted by Arndt, (1981), this gave a positive economic and social content to the philosophy of colonial trusteeship by affirming the need for minimum standards of nutrition health and education.

At the local level, the earlier Native Authority Councils were replaced by the Country Council. Suffice it to say that this development led to the establishment of Community Development Division at the local level and thus became an important organ of government, charged with the responsibility of channelling and coordinating the efforts of the people towards promoting social and economic development (Onwuzuluike, 1987). The Development and Welfare Fund provided for the colonies by the British Government was thus able to permeate to the grassroots level through this third tier of government. By the late 1940’s however, an element of modern community concept in rural development was introduced in the form of mass mobilization for self-help activities.

By the beginning of the war in 1967, the observations of Sir James Robertson, aptly typified the state of development needs and awareness and the immense role the governments expected self-help activities to play to compliment their efforts. After the Nigerian Civil War (1967- 1970), the need for massive reconstruction work further aroused the people a revival of the spirit of self-help which is deeply rooted in their rich traditions. Most communities realized that the only way for immediate reconstruction of the war ravaged facilities was through self-help. This period also marked the evolution of a multiplicity of social clubs with aims consonant with social insurance and self-help. Further efforts by government to motivate development at the grassroots, led to the enactment of the 1976 Local Government Reform,
to create new growth centres for further spatial spread of development. In addition is the creation of the local government service commission, the conferment of wider powers and functions to the Local Governments by the 1979 constitution and the enactment of the special Development Fund Law, aimed at generating more funds for community development at the local level sufficed. Thus, deliberate government support became necessary to increase the spate of development activities by the various communities (Akpomivie, B.O. 2010).

The period between 1973 and 2007 marked a watershed in rural development efforts in Nigeria. The period witnessed deliberate government efforts at mobilizing the people for rural development. A number of task forces and bodies were set up to oversee, organize and to direct partnership with the people on self-help activities. They include: Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural infrastructure (DFRRI), Rural Electrification Schemes; Credit Schemes to small holders through various specialized institutions such as People’s Bank, Agricultural and Cooperative Development Bank, Community Banks, NERFUND, SME Credit Schemes, the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Universal Primary Education Schemes and Low Cost Housing Schemes, Health Scheme as the Primary Health Care Programme, National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life for Rural Women Programme as well as the Family Support Programme (FSP). More recent programmes include the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the YOUWIN program as well as the Small and Medium Industries Equity Investment Schemes (SMIEIS).

The various state governments had also articulated blueprints on rural development, adopting the Integrated Rural Development Strategy as their strategic option to carry development to the masses. From the foregoing historical analysis, two principles underlying rural community development activities have emerged. These are (a) the principle of individual and corporate survival and (b) the principle of societal “felt need”. These two principles have variously acted as the motive force in organizing and mobilizing the people in their pursuit of self development.

AGENCIES OF MOBILIZATION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The following institutions can serve and has always served as agencies of mobilization at the local communities:

(a) The Local Government: the local government being the government nearest to the populace, is one of the best mobilizations for generating motivations and encouraging mobilization for self-help, as well as including the much needed wider participation of the local population in the decision making process at the local level. According to Edward Scouma, “the so-called third world is a rural world where any meaningful discussion of rural development really means not only “talking of overall national development,” but because “it is in the rural areas that the problems of inequitable distribution of resources or a marked lack of purchasing power and of grinding poverty in which the wretched members of society stagnate and stare one in the face with brutal clarity. The raison d’etre of the local government in Nigeria is to, at least halt the deteriorating living conditions in the rural areas of this country. An effective local government will be better disposed than the state or federal government, not only to stem the grim reality of the ‘rising tide of rural poverty but also be more able to evoke the spirit of locality corporation thereby being more able to galvanise and mobilise the support of local citizenry in participating in all the programmes that may affect them”

(b) The formal but non-government. In Nigeria today, there are no fewer than Ninety-Seven Thousand (97,000) rural communities and government has been encouraging these communities to form development associations. These associations will thus become agents
at the cutting edge of development at the grassroots level. If these various individuals as well as associations are separate units and to take on the development of themselves and their communities in their own hands, they first have to be educated to the fact that they have the capacity to bring about change in themselves and their environment; and then, they have to be empowered through political education to be willing to take on this responsibility. This is where the directorate of social mobilisation are working in concert to realise the objective of mobilising the people to usher in a new era of integrated and authentic rural development which is human centred.

In the rural and urban communities today, there are such formal and organised voluntary associations such as the town unions, community development associations, social clubs, corporative movements, professional bodies (National Union of Road Transport Workers), Bar associations, medical Associations, Fraternities such The Rotary Clubs, etc, whose membership and cultural affinities cut across the length and breadth of this country. Often time, these associations seek to promote not only the welfare of their members but also sporadically undertake the welfare interest of the society within which they live. Some of the members of these associations cut across ethnic and cultural cleavages and they could become veritable instruments of mobilising local citizenry since they live amidst them.

c. The Non-Formal Organisations: At the community level can also be found non-formal or not so well organised pressure group associations that equally can influence the local populace. These associations include market associations, student unions, umuada associations, village elders’ council etc. These organisations found out that the most critical local levels of the society could also be used as mobilising agents at the local levels of Nigeria.

D. Traditional/Institutions. It is no longer a secret to know that certain persons, for example the traditional rulers posses and exercise great influence on the masses. Somehow, traditional rulers still enjoy the confidence and great respect of the greater part of Nigerian populations, to such a degree that they still remain undisputable force to reckon with for effective and successful mobilisation of efforts. This statement is true in the South Western part of Nigeria, especially among the Yorubas and Binis, truer in the Northern part of the country where the Emirs, to a large extent, hold sway over the lives and activities of those in their domain; but less true in the South Eastern part of the country, especially among the Ibos, the Ibibios and the Ijaws whose egalitarian and republican way of live make them less amenable to unalloyed loyalty and unresolved obeisance to their traditional rulers. Also, these days of Naira Chiefs (most of the traditional stools are keenly contested by various wealthy aspirants and since these traditional rulers are in-charge of various villages or communities, the views and status of the victor, after the usual life and death contest may hardly be respected outside his own immediate village within the town). Therefore, excessive reliance on the so-called traditional rulers especially in the eastern part of the country for purposes of mass mobilisation may boomerang especially if they are at logger heads with the people-oriented and people-elected interest groups such as town unions, social clubs, etc. Therefore, in the Eastern part of Nigeria as opposed to those states in the West and in the North, there should be a cautious use of agents of mass mobilisation for self-help efforts in rural development.

GROUP DYNAMISM IN RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Various group efforts are often times involved in the process of rural and community development in Nigeria. These groups, according to Chukwuezi (2000), combine the efforts of their members in pulling resources together to attain one form of development or the other
within the various communities. There are various groups within the Nigerian communities that engage in the development of their immediate communities. The issue of associational group was quite common in various parts of Nigeria and they are widely regarded as veritable tools for rural and community development. This associational spirit and orientation was relatively popular in traditional Igbo society of Nigeria and the modern society of the Igbos has witnessed invigorated form of associational life, hence there are elements of dynamism in self-help group relations. A handful of writers commented on this dynamics. Scholars such as Wallenstein opined that these modern associational structures were as a result of European civilisation. Onwuejeogwu (1984), noted that the Igbo society was (and is still) characterized by various forms of associations, which formed part of Igbo traditional governance. The various associations found among the Igbos were part of Igbo traditional lives and the modernised forms of these earlier associations are being put in place to suit the modern times. They have equally encouraged development efforts in the community through awareness and sensitisation of the community members. Some of these groups include:

**Professional Association:**
Before the period of colonial rule in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, there were indigenous professional groups like the guilds of Native doctors and guilds of Black smiths etc. These associations were collectively concerned with the welfare of their members and that of the community. In modern times, professional associations have tried to improve the community in one way or the other. Members of a professional association, who are united by the fact that they are of the same community, think of impacting development activities through such forum. This kind of association might set target for themselves and find ways and means of achieving such targets. Some have built schools, roads, brought electricity and other amenities through their influence.

**Age Grade Associations**
Age Grade Associations exists in many African communities in general and Nigeria in particular especially among the Igbos in the South-Eastern part of the country. Among the Igbos, the traditional age grade organisation has been transformed into modern age grade associations. The Igbo has elaborate age sets that are graded according to the periods of births of its male members. Uguru (1995) described the various age grade sets obtained in Abiriba town in Ohafia Local government of Abia state. According to him, they are graded between within the interval of three years. Same applied in all the twenty-six communities of Ohafia. In Ohafia, these age grades include the women folk of the same age range.

In the traditional Igbo society, the age grades perform various tasks depending on what was assigned to them. Today, in many Igbo societies, the age grades have accomplished important tasks and are still accomplishing various strides in community development. For instance, in Okagwe Ohafia, the Okpotomba age grade built an ultra modern two storey-building school hall for the Isiama Secondary School, situated in their community. This, they accomplished alone as the other age grades have their own assigned tasks to carry out. In Amaekpu Ohafia, the Onyirimba and Ifemba age grades respectively built two link roads that where almost beyond repair and named same after their age grade as mark of immortalisation in their community. In Abiriba Ohafia, age grades engage in competitive activities to see who builds more for the community. With varying age grades struggling to register its mark, community development have become more popular thereby improving the welfare of members of the host community. In many Igbo areas, the age grade organisations
have built schools, hospitals, post offices, etc. Others have formed transport companies and other valuable commercial ventures.

**Town unions**
The town unions represent an association formed by the people of the same town, local government or even district as the case may be. The modern face of town union emerged during colonial rule especially after people have migrated to the colonial cities. The colonial government had no well-designed welfare for the teeming migrants that were flocking to the city and the city proved a difficult sphere of survival and a place of strangeness.

The idea of having a union to look after the welfare of their members far from home was not new, as could be deduce from the Igbo axiom “Nwanne di na Mba”, which denotes the significance of town unionism especially in a foreign land. In the spirit of the above stated axiom, many African migrants carried the various forms of social relations in their traditional societies into new area in which they moved to. They also had attachment to their home and felt that they will come back to it. Further, the various social amenities and services they enjoyed in the city, they would want to have and enjoy in their home towns. This nostalgic feeling may be regarded as the magic wand that rural and community development have utilized in making Town Union a veritable tool of self-help approach of rural and community development in Nigeria since inception.

**Social clubs**
Social clubs were quite popular even before the Civil war in Nigeria. In the Igbo area of Nigeria, the civil war, among other things caused various forms of dislocation in terms of losing political, economic and social positions in the Nigerian societies. The people were desirous to improve their lots, personally and collectively after the civil war. Various associations of common interests were formed for one form of goal or the other. Some of these associations metamorphosed into social clubs. Some of these social clubs draw their members from a particular town or local government areas while others draw their members from various sections of Nigerian society. These social clubs protect the interest of their members and also serve as forms of social security for its members. The social clubs especially those from the local government or town try to improve the area. They could contribute towards erecting certain social amenities in the host communities. They also award scholarships to some of the vulnerable and less privilege and disadvantage, yet deserving individuals of the communities. In Igbo land for instance, many of the social clubs built bus tops, motor parks, Markets etc. Even though of late, social clubs in Nigeria are no longer as viable as they were in the 1970s, however, they are still veritable instrument of self-help approach of rural and community development.

**Town women associations**
In Igboland, the women have various forms of associations that aid community development. One of the popular women associations is the General Assembly of Married Women in a town. The women association contribute to various development projects in their home communities. They organise meeting periodically such as the annual August meeting, when they discuss various self-help-based rural community developmental projects. They use their association to assist the men in their various development projects. It is worthy of note that towns Women association have initiated and completed various community developmental projects such as town halls, school blocks, markets, post offices, etc.
Individual Efforts
Community development, in the words of Chukwuezi (2000), has always been described as a group activity organised by the people or the people in co-operation of government. The essence of group action is always emphasized. One could equally and aptly also argue that some individuals, singularly contributes to community development. They may be solely responsible for the resources; however, their activities benefit the community. In this light, it might be logical to hypothesize that even though, individuals singularly provide the resources, but since their activities are towards the development of the group, it is seen as community development. Some wealthy individuals make enormous contributions towards the development of their communities by way of providing resources both human and resources for certain development projects. Some of them singularly sponsor a number of scholarships to their kits and kin to ensure their academic development. Some of them have donated the stated amount of money for which a launching was slated.

RECOMMENDATION
We recommend the following:
1. That Government at all levels should encourage communities to partake fully in all issues concerning their development, morally, financially and otherwise conventionally.
2. That the local governments in Nigeria should provide enabling environment to communities to initiate, plan and execute projects that will be beneficial to them.
3. Communities that are embarking on self-help projects should be encouraged by ways of financial and technical assistance from the government.
4. Communities should be aware that developmental projects embarked upon by themselves through self-help projects are meant for their overall well being and as such should protect and ensure that they are maintained hence the involvement of these groups.
5. Despite the laudable and generally accepted values of self-help in rural community development, it is instructive to state that it should not be used to replace the role of government in rural community development in Nigeria.
CONCLUSION

This paper made exposition of the inner dynamics of rural community development in Nigeria; as well as establishing the fact that the survival instinct and the societal felt-needs inform most self-help activities. This community-based or community-dictated development approach involves the movement of the people designed to promote better living for the whole community within the active participation of, and if possible on the initiative of the community concerned.

The contribution of self-help development activities to rural community development depends largely on the existence of committed local leaders in the rural areas concerned as well as the extent to which government encourages local planning and participation. The wide variations in the scope and impact of self-help activities on the welfare of rural dwellers in different parts of the study areas reflect the nature of community leadership and their inclination towards self-help programmes. This implies that in those areas where there are no effective self-help groups, community development activities have not made much impact on the social welfare of the rural population. It is often taken for granted that people in the local communities will at one level or the other participate in the development of their communities.

To ensure a virile and viable rural community development, the above recommendations should be religiously paid heed to. This is in line with the conclusion reached in this paper that self-help is a relevant approach for rural community development in Nigeria; hence rural community development is a process that leads to not only more jobs, income and infrastructure, but also communities that are better able to manage change. Community members can better mobilise existing skills, reframe problems, work cooperatively and use community assets in new ways. Principles of self-help and participation guide a flexible process. While there is no recipe, major steps are identifying existing concerns, engagement, self-examination, exploration, prioritisation, planning and action.
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