The Efforts of Idepe Community Development Association in the Transformation of Idepe Community, South-West Nigeria

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Abstract

Most communities have demonstrated resilience by engaging in self-help efforts in order to improve on the quality of lives and livelihoods of their people. Consequently, to assess the efforts of the Idepe Community Development Association in the development of Idepe community, a study was designed in 2017 by the authors, to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, using the Survey method and In-depth Interview method. Results indicate that: building of community market stalls; the renovation of roads, healthcare centres, pipe borne water, educational facilities as well as construction of community town hall are the projects already provided by the target association in Idepe community. Result equally revealed that majority of the respondents affirmed that the projects executed by the association have indeed made positive effects in the lives of the people; hence was rated by the community members as above average. The paper concludes that the self-help efforts of most community development associations and their potentials as resources for community development in Nigeria can be step-up when enduring remedies are provided to the numerous challenges they face.

Keywords: Community, development, association, transformation.

Introduction

One of the enduring and flourishing heritages of traditional African societies is their involvement in community development efforts. It has been an indigenous mechanism and technique employed by the people to identify their felt-needs, choose what they want and take collective action to satisfy their needs (Okwakpam, 2010). People at different times, in pre-colonial Nigeria, had organized themselves collectively, with the aid of community resources to improve on both physical and functional facilities in their respective localities. For instance, communal labour was often sought in the construction of community-based infrastructure such as homestead, clearing and construction of roads, public utility buildings, market stalls, Oba's palace, town halls,etc (Akinsorotan & Olujide, 2006).

In the modern world, this communal role is now being performed, in most communities, by a unit of the community social structure called community development association. According to Akinsorotan & Olujide (2006), Community Development Association (CDA) is a process of social action, in which people of a community organize themselves for planning action to meet their needs and solve

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their problems. They execute their plans with maximum reliance upon community resources and supplement these resources, when necessary, with services and materials from government. This became necessary because, having realized that government alone might not be able to provide all their needs, communities have resorted to taking their development destinies in their hands by looking inward, through the establishment of community-based institutions designed to act as pressure groups, attracting the attention of the government of the day to the challenges of community development in their communities and/or complementing government efforts by mobilizing local resources in order to undertake development projects and programmes that they observed to be very useful to improving the quality of lives of members of their respective communities.

Consequently, CDA has become a veritable and primary vehicle for the indigenes of a community to participate actively in the development process of their respective communities (Kyessi, 2002; Brian, 2010). Most of these CDAs are specifically instituted with the main objective of contributing to the social and economic development of their various communities (Akinsorotan and Olujide, 2006). The issue of community development association in Edo state has been an issue and its effect has carried a dual view in the social context of the society, one of the communities that have beamed its light in this regard is Idepe community in Edo state. Unlike other communities in Nigeria, there have been limited exposures on the impact of community development association especially on physical structure and social well-being of citizens in the community. It is therefore pertinent in this context to study and assess the efforts the Idepe Community Development Association (ICDA) and its developmental impact on Idepe community; as well as community perception of its efforts in Idepe community.

Statement of the problem

Development is what many societies in the world strive for and this may come from individual, community or /and governmental effort. However, the effort of government to develop the society it govern has been erroneous task and this this left many communities underdeveloped hence making many of the dwellers to either live in perpetual lack or are forced to migrate. According to Ohonba (2009) in the colonial era, community development practice was established by the colonial government to ensure that the development of the colonies was not left for the colonial government. However, the situations have never in any way different as societies still practice this long practice. In Ondo State, the idea of community development has been seen with multi-dimensional outlook, as many see the community development as the duty of the community leaders, others as the duty of the government following the social contract agreement of the citizen. There has been disdain in the action of the community developers in recent past, as the most of the land owners see their action as exploitative and others as developmental in action. In this light the study seeks to examine the activities an effort of Idepe community Development Association in bringing the sort about transformation needed in the society where they are located.

Brief literature review

Community development, as it is being practiced in the modern day world, emerged in the 18th century when Robert Owen, socialist crusader, sought to create a perfect community through community planning. Subsequently in Oneida, USA and some parts of Australia, some groups of individuals came together to establish international Utopia communities. Even though they did not succeed as much in entrenching the philosophy for which they instituted these communities, the methods they employed became useful in the 1920s and 1930s for the colonial governments in Africa to promote the ideals of community development (Ohonba, 2009). In Nigeria, its origin is traceable to the activities of Mr. Chadwick, who was a colonial officer in the Eastern part of Nigeria in the 1940s. His major contribution was his community mobilization of the Udi people towards community development. In Udi where he served the colonial government, Chadwick became acquainted with the development needs of the people; and hence motivated, mobilized and organized them so that they could actualize these needs (Omolewa, 1985).

The post-independence government in Nigeria built on the foundation laid by the colonial government, on the issue of community development practice. They accepted the idea of self-help and cooperation of government, voluntary organizations and communities into the development of the communities. Some of the outcomes of this cooperation were the building of community schools, health centres, roads, free donation of lands by the communities without any form of compensation (Ohonba, 2009). However, due to the regional nature of the Nigeria socio-political structure in the first republic, community development became decentralized with the formation of Rural Development Committees at the National, Provincial and inter-ministerial levels. Consequently, while people within the localities controlled community development practices, the headquarters concentrated on policy formulation.

Community Development Associations: Structures and Functions

Community Development Associations (CDA) exists under different nomenclatures and structures. Membership usually set their rules and regulations themselves, in order to guide the behaviour of their members. They often plan and execute their programmes with little or no outside assistance. As Akinsorotan and Olujide (2006) noted, their activities specifically involve holding meetings to discuss their projects and programmes, identifying their felt-needs, participating in their community development project activities through labour supply, monetary contribution and many others.More so, not only do CDAs assist target communities in identifying their social needs, they also help to consider the most effective ways of meeting these needs (Managai et al, 2015). They help also in promoting a sense of cooperation and integration among its members as well as providing them with services. It also help in educating, sensitizing, creating awareness and mobilizing its members towards achieving their goals; while at the same time providing infrastructural facilities for the target community (Danjuma, 2014).

Theoretical Framework: Strengths Perspective

Strength perspective is associated with the works of Ann Weick (1989), and Dennis Saleebey (1997). It focuses on the capacities and potentialities of individuals/ communities for self-development. It concentrates on enabling individuals and communities to articulate and work towards their hopes for the future (Healy, 2005). According to Saleebey (1997: 4), the strengths perspective formula is to 'mobilize community strengths (talents, knowledge, capacities) in the service of achieving their goals and visions and the communities will have a better quality of life on their terms.' It recognizes and focuses on the strengths and capacities of communities to respond to the problems facing them.

The key assumptions of this perspective, arising from the works of Weick (1989), and Saleebey (1997) include among others thatall people/communities have the strengths and resources for transformation; people/communities usually demonstrate resilience, rather than pathology, in the face of adverse life events, because all human organisms have an inclination for healing (Saleebey, 1997); service users/communities have the capacity to determine what is best for them, and hence they really do not need any body to define their best interest for them. It argues further that a change must come from inside the community. This is necessary in the sense that Ondo State the community will own and support changes and initiatives that it has developed, as this will build pride and independence within the community.

In terms of its application to this study, the Strengths perspective promotes people-centered community development. The establishment of the ICDA in Idepe community of, by the indigenes of the community, is an indication of their readiness to tap the capacities and potentialities of community members towards the self-help development of the community. This association provides for the community members a platform on which they can articulate their ideas, mobilize their talents, knowledge and capacities; and hence work together in creating an Idepe community of their dream. It is equally an indication of the resilience of community members to have a better quality of life, in the face of adverse life events occasioned by the numerous development challenges that seem to affect rural communities in Nigeria. This association has recognized the inability of the government to address all the challenges of rural communities, partly because of the numerous areas clamoring for attention; and hence agrees with the Strengths perspective argument that development must start from within the community, as drivers of the transformation process.

Methodology

This study will adopt a cross-sectional survey design and will make use of quantitative and qualitative instruments and method of data collection and analysis. From Idepe community, 400 members of 20 years and above who have stayed in Idepe community for a consecutive period of not less than 5 years, long enough to understand the issues under examination. A simple random sampling method will be adopted in 4 quarters out of the 14 quarters in the community, using a lottery process. Furthermore, 12in-depth interviews will be conducted in the study areaand will interview the President,

the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of this development association; while 2among opinion leaders in each selected quarters, through the purposive method of data collection.

More specifically, the study employed a one-time survey method in Idepe community without having to go back again to elicit information from the same respondents the second time.The semi-structured questionnaire was used directly or indirectly depending on their level of literacy. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for the questionnaires; while the tapes of the In-Depth Interview sessions were transcribed, synthesized and organized under different headings using manual content analysis.

Results and discussion of findings

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristic.N=400

	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	350	87.5
	Female	50	12.5
Age	20-25	40	10.0
	26-30	160	40.0
	35-40	100	25.0
	40 years & above	100	25.0
Religious Affiliation	Christian	337	84.3
	Muslim	57	14.3
	ATR	03	0.7
	Others	03	0.7
Marital status	Single	112	28.0
	Married	278	72.0

Source: Fieldwork 2017

IMPLICATION OF THE TABLE 1

The result revealed that there are more male respondents than the female respondents with 87.5% and on the age differential, the study shows that most of the respondents were within 26 years and above as they constitute 90% of the entire respondents. The result also shows that majority of the respondents are Christians as the constitute 84.3% of the entire respondents followed by the Muslims with 14.3%. next inline on the analysis are the married respondents as they make up majority of the study respondents with 72% as against the unmarried with 28% respectively.

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TABLE 2: Issues of Idepe Development Association Projects in Idepe Community

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Are you aware of the existence of Idepe Community Development Association?	Yes No No Response Total	319 49 32 400	79.7 12.3 8.0 100.0
Do you think Idepe community development association has carried out any project since its establishment?	Yes No Don't know Total	292 55 53 400	73.0 13.7 13.3 100.0
projects or programmes executed by the association	Construction of Roads Community Market Health Centre Pipe Borne Water Educational Town Hall Total	85 115 80 33 28 21 362	23.5 31.8 22.1 9.1 7.7 5.8 100

Source: Field work, 2017

In terms of the awareness of the existence of the ICDA, while majority of the respondents (79.7%) claimed knowledge of its existence in Idepe community, 12.3 percent claimed not to be aware and the remaining 8.0 percent of them did not respond to the question. By this majority verdict it therefore means that the presence of ICDA is a common knowledge among the people of Idepe community in Okitikpukpa Local Government Area of Ondo State.

However, the mere existence of any development association, in any community, is not enough in determining its usefulness or functionality to the survival and development of such community. Therefore, in assessing the usefulness of the ICDA to the Idepe community, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they have seen/heard any projects/programmes executed by the development association in Idepe community. The findings, as indicated in table 1, show that 292 (i.e. 73%) of the respondentsthink that the association has provided some projects or programme to assist the development of Idepe community since its establishment; whereas 55 (i.e. 13.7%) of the respondentsbelieve thatit has not yet provided any developmental elements for the community. However, 53 (i.e. 13.3%) of the respondents claimed not to have knowledge of whether or not ithasactually done anything in Idepe community. This majority view thus indicates that ICDA has been making efforts in order to keep up with the main philosophy for which virtually all Community Development Associations were or is set up, that is a concerned with the development problems of and development projects/programme in their various communities.

To probe the issue of project provision by the development association further, those who claimed to have seen some of the Projects/programmes provided by the association were asked to identify such projects already provided in the community. Respondents were allowed to list as many projects/programmes as they could remember which the ICDA has provided in Idepe community since it came into existence. Results, as

indicated in table 1, show that the building of community market stalls, listed 118 times,i.e. 31.8 percent of the total listing of projects/programmes by the respondents, is the most noticeable project embarked upon by the association in the community that the public can easily identified. This is followed by the construction and renovation of roads, healthcare centre, pipe borne water, educational facilities and construction of community town hall which were listed 85 times (i.e.23.5%); 80 times (i.e. 22.1%); 33 times (i.e. 9.1%); 28 times (7.7%); and21 times (i.e. 5.8%) of the total listing of the ICDA's projects/programmes by the research respondents respectively.

In the In-depth Interview sessions (IDIs) conducted among opinion leaders in Idepe community, the general opinion is that Idepe Community Development Association has made some efforts at providing some infrastructure and social services for the target community. This common view is represented in the views of one of the opinion leaders in one of the In-depth Interview sessions. According to her:

The Idepe Community Development Association has provided good facilities for the people such as pipe borne water, town halls, community marketamongst others; hence they have been very relevant in the community. **IDI –Female- 16/05/2017**

What ICDA has provided so far,seem to tally with theactivities of other CDAs in other communities in Nigeria. Okwakpamstudy in 2010, at Emohua town in Rivers state, as containedin the reviewed literature for instance revealed that many communities in Emohua town, through their CDAs, embarked on self-help development projects such as the construction of roads, markets, health centres, maternity homes, schools, bridges, water supply projects, town halls or civic centres, rural electrification projects.

Table 3:The Effect of Projects provided by Idepe Community Development Association in the Development of Idepe Community

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think that these projects or programmes have improved the quality of lives of Idepe community members?	Yes	307	76.8
	No	56	14
	Don't know	37	9.2
	Total	**400**	**100.0**
In what ways have you benefitted from its programme or projects?	Educational facilities for effective learning	32	6.8
	Good health care for quality life	91	19.4
	Easy movement within and outside the community	99	21.1
	Clean water supply	89	18.9
	Improving on commercial activities of the community	101	21.5
	Improving social activities like Town Hall Construction	47	10.0
	No Response	11	2.3
	Total	**400**	**100**

Source: Field work, 2017

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The result in table 3 revealed that 307 (i.e. 76.8%) of the respondents affirmed that the projects executed by the target ICDA have improved the quality of lives of Idepe community members over the years; 56 (i.e. 14%) of the respondents disagreed; while 37 (i.e. 9.2%) of them didn't answer the question asked. This majority opinion is an indication that ICDA has actually made its presence felt in Idepe community in relation to contributing to the development of the community. One of the main arguments of the Strengths Perspective, as itemized in the theoretical framework of this study, is that communities usually show resilience in the face of adverse life – events. Such resilience is shown in the efforts made by community based development associations, including ICDA, as they try to find solutions to some of their community based challenges, especially in situations where government inadequate attention to infrastructural facilities and social services become frustrating.

In terms of the specific ways in which the community members have benefitted from the projects/programmes of the Idepe Community Development Association within the community, respondents again were asked to list as many ways as they could remember in which they have actually benefitted in this respect. The above table 2 indicates that in 101 times (21.5% of the total listing) the study respondents listed that the provision of market stalls has improved on the commercial activities in the community. Closely following this is the idea that the target community has benefitted also in the area of having easy movement of people and goods within and outside of the target community, and this was listed 99 times, which represents 21.5 percent of the total listing by the respondents. More so, good healthcare for increasing quality of life was also one of the ways in which the target community has benefitted so far from this target development association, as listed 91 times, representing 19.4 percent of the total listing. Furthermore, respondents equally claimed that provision of pipe borne water has made it possible for community members to have access to clean water supply, and this was indicated 89 times, representing 18.9 percent of the total listing of benefits of ICDA's projects to Idepe community. Also 47 times, representing 10 percent of the total listing, respondents indicated that the provision of town hall has led to improvement in social activities in the community; while 32 times respondents listed that the provision of educational materials has facilitated teaching and learning in the schools where facilities were provided by ICDA.

Even among the participants in the In-depth Interview sessions, the idea that ICDA's projects have benefitted community members was equally rife. This common view is represented by the views of the following participants. According to one of them:

The Idepe Community Development Association has renovated our roads and its now accessible for the farmers to transport their goods to the market for sales. More so, the hospital that they built has also helped a great deal in saving lives.**Male-IDI-17/05/2017**.

Similarly, another respondent has this to say:

The roads are now accessible by the students in the community; the Idepe Community Development Association has also brought peace and progress to the community which is very commendable. **Male, IDI- 18/05/2017.**

Virtually all of these infrastructure and social services are very vital in improving on the quality of lives and livelihoods of community members. ICDA for instance,

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has constructed new roads and also renovated the dilapidated roads in order to improve the road network to other neighboring communities so as to enhance the livelihood and economic development of Idepe community. The relevance of good road network and transportation to farmers is obvious as most of these farmers live in rural communities that need to be linked up with other communities, especially the urban areas as sources of market for their products.

More so is the idea of providing market stalls for community members. This can attract traders from other communities, both as buyers and sellers, thereby increasing the volume of trade. Furthermore, given the relevance of pipe borne water to human health and industry it is therefore not surprising that respondents considered it as one of the most pressing needs for which the community benefits a lot. An individual can only participate effectively in community affairs when he is sound health wise. The modern day approach to community development is based on participatory framework. Community develops not only when members are aware of development opportunities but also when they are ready to make some effort in harnessing such opportunities. The amount of effort community members would make may be a function of their physical and mental wellbeing. This equally rubs on the relevance of health care system in human society.

Perception of Idepe Community Development Association's Self-help Efforts in Idepe

It must however be stated that how community members see ICDA's community development efforts will further go a long way in helping us to understand the effects of ICDA's efforts in Idepe community members. This requires relating its efforts to community expectations, and allowing community members to rate its performance on a continuum of very high to low levels.The findings for the above issues are presented in the table below:

Table 4: Ratings of the Self-help Efforts of Idepe Community Development Association

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think that the Idepe community development association self-help efforts are in line with the community expectations?	Yes No Don't know **Total**	189 134 77 **400**	47.3 33.5 19.2 **100.0**
Rate the self-help efforts of this association in Idepe community?	Very high High Low No performance **Total**	53 160 114 73 **400**	13.3 40.0 28.5 18.2 **100.0**

Source: Field work, 2017

The result in table 3 above shows the perception of the respondents with regards to the self-help efforts of the association.In terms of community expectations: while 189 (i.e. 47.3%) of the respondents believe that the self-help efforts of ICDA are in line with the expectations of the community; 134 (i.e. 33.5%) of the respondentsdisagreed with this assertion;and 77 (i.e. 19.2%) of the respondents were indifferent to the question. This common opinion, expressed by majority of the respondents, was

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similar to the common views of participants in the IDI sessions. The view of one of them represented their common view. According to him:
Some of the educational infrastructures erected by the Idepe Community Development Association have helped a lot of families to train their children in schools. Hence, they have exceeded the expectations of the community members.**Male, IDI- 18/05/2017**

Finally, the respondents were also asked to rate the self-help efforts of the association. The result revealed that: while 53 (13.3%) of the respondents rated the association very high in self-help efforts in Idepe community; 160 (40%) of them rated the association's activities as high; 114 (28.5%) of the respondents were of the view that the self-help efforts of the association have been low; and 73 (18.3%) of them noted that the association has not been performing as expected. The result therefore shows that the overall assessment of the self-help efforts of ICDA is above average. This is so because when the high and the very high values are combined, we have a value of 53.3 percent of the respondents' population who have rated the performance of the association as in the least high. The efforts of the ICDA are in line with the basic functions of CDAs, as contained in the reviewed literature.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The modern approach to community development is an approach that is inclusive, in which there is either collaboration between government and the target community; or in which a community takes its destiny in its hands by becoming both the provider and the recipient of development efforts. As the Strengths Perspective has argued, community will own and support changes and initiatives that it has developed. When the community owns initiatives, the process of creating and sustaining change will build pride and independence within the community.
Whereas in most cases, community based development associations have the will-power to contribute to uplifting the standards of living of the members of their recipient communities, their efforts are always being dwindled by sundry challenges. The self-help efforts of most community development associations and their potentials as resources for community development in Nigeria can be step-up when enduring remedies are provided to the numerous challenges they face. This will provide them with the necessary encouragement they need, in order to sustain their consistent efforts at contributing to the transformation of their communities, given the dynamic nature of social life and social phenomena.

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