

Institutional Framework for Sustainable Community Engagement for Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Institutional Framework for Sustainable Community Engagement for Development is a study of the platform, concept, framework, bodies, organs, and social constructs that are used to facilitate the involvement and participation of the community in its developmental activities, or the process to facilitate the communities to buy into policies and programmes of the government or other Local, National, and international development institutions in rural and urban communities. The main objective is to find out the necessity and how best to mobilize the communities to participate and achieve optimum results for their benefits. The data was gathered and analyzed using the secondary data collection process. Also, the study made use of the Maxian Conflict resolution and system approach as its Theoretical framework, as engagement with communities involves interdependence of component structures of the society with vested interests which leads to conflicts, its resolution, new conflicts, and new resolutions in thesis, synthesis and antithesis (Ryan Law, 2021). The findings are that it is critical to engage the community through an all-inclusive stakeholders' consensus to ensure their collective buy in through a participatory rural appraisal of bottom to top in doing a needs assessment for their Development to avoid unmanageable conflicts. It is strongly recommended that for the sustainability of value adding projects with positive multiplier effects, there should be no imposition of projects from the top of the endogenous factors or from any of the exogenous factors through the active participation, collaboration, and direct involvement of all segments of the community through An-All Stakeholders inclusive integrations in the engagement process:

Keywords: *Institutional Framework, Sustainable Community, Community Engagement, Sustainable Development, Participatory Development, All- Stakeholders' Involvement.*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "Institutional Framework for Sustainable Community Engagement for Development" encompasses a multifaceted approach to creating and maintaining structures that facilitate ongoing, effective collaboration between institutions and communities for developmental purposes. This framework is pivotal in ensuring that development initiatives are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable and

adaptable to future needs. It involves establishing and reinforcing institutions that are attuned to the nuances of community dynamics, cultural sensitivities, and local needs. These institutions act as mediators, facilitators, and implementers of development projects, ensuring that initiatives are aligned with the community's long-term goals and environmental sustainability.

Critical to this framework is the principle of participatory engagement, where community members are not just passive recipients but active contributors to the development process. This participative approach fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among community members, leading to more sustainable and resilient developmental outcomes. Moreover, the framework emphasizes the importance of adaptability and flexibility, allowing institutions to respond effectively to changing circumstances and emerging challenges. By integrating these elements, the institutional framework becomes a cornerstone for fostering sustainable development, ensuring that community engagement is not a one-time effort but a continuous, evolving process that respects and harnesses local insights and expertise for collective progress.

Thus, this symbiotic relationship is significant in bringing other social variables such as platforms, social constructs, organs, bodies and their building blocks that facilitate the involvement of the various levels and calibres of stakeholders in the development of the communities. It is critical to engage the community stakeholders first to ensure their buy-in from the bottom to the top Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Any project or programme without their input and participation is a stillbirth as their acceptance and support is one of the indicators of success as continuity is assured with the masses of the people involved through their leaders.

According to Peters (2006), the term institutional framework refers to a set of formal organizational structures, rules and informal norms for service provision. Such a framework is the precondition for the successful implementation of water, sanitation and water management intervention tools and therefore needs to be considered in particular. In the field of water and sanitation management, an institution framework involves outlining the responsibilities of service institutions of various aspects of the sector "(IEES 2006)

He went on to add that "Institutional structures vary from country to country but whatever the specific structures are like, it is essential to have mechanisms for dialogues and coordination. A balance has to be met between providing a fully integrated approach where specific issues may get lost due to lack of expertise or interest and a sectoral approach where different policies are followed without any coordination (Gwap, 2008).

The choice of water and sanitation was because water is very vital and also sanitation is equally important and it involves urban and rural settings, rich and poor as they all use water and are involved in sanitation management (Ihemeson, 2023). The combined effects of water and sanitation are vital of life-threatening which requires a special arrangement in building durable structures or delivery agents in the form of institutional platforms, the organs to deliver efficient

quality service. What is applicable in Water and Sanitation is also applicable to all sectors of society as there is a need for the engagement of the direct beneficiaries of any development process to ensure sustainability through their buy-in.

Therefore, there is, an absolute necessity to key in the inputs of the target audience who are the direct beneficiaries, the facilitating, the funding and regulating institutions. All stakeholders must be identified, and dialogued with, where there are differences in perceptions, intent and the delivery process, there must be reconciliation and compromise to reach agreements. The “All-Stakeholders Inclusive Approach” needs community engagement and coordination to know the real prioritized needs of the people and the way they may want them to be addressed so that their sensitivities are not bypassed or not factored in. The process of engaging them, sustaining their interests and participation is very important and that is what sustainable community engagement is all about.

Continuing in his earlier line of thoughts “Peters (2006) in his paper titled the challenges in developing an institutional framework, presented at the International Ecological Engineering society, he said”. The term Institutional framework refers to a set of formal organizational structures, rules, and informal norms for service provision. Such a framework is the precondition for successful implementation of other sanitation and water management intervention tools”. He went further to say “An institutional framework involves outlining the responsibilities of service institutions for various aspects of the sector”. As was said earlier on, it is not only in the water and sanitation sector that is a vital area that institutional framework is used. It is used in all sectors, in all communities and all countries. In a traditional or modern society, there are old and new mechanisms of service delivery and they represent the formal and informal institutional framework.

The above position is further supported by Peters, thus "Institutional Structures vary from country to country but whatever the specific structures are like, it is essential to have a mechanism for dialogue and coordination". It is when such mechanisms do not exist that we have a breakdown of law and order and sabotage. The primacy of constructive engagement cannot be overemphasized as presented by scholars as lack of dialogue and coordination leads to disarticulation of development. The Sustainable Resource Recovery and Zero Waste Approaches in 2018 wrote on Institutional Framework and defined "Legal and Institutional Framework as a broad concept and it concerns the functions of government, private enterprises, legislative bodies and regulatory agency (Hart, 2019). Supporting this definition, The Statistical Data and Material Exchange (SDMX) (2004) said "Institutional Framework refers to a law or other formal provision that assigns primary responsibility as well as the authority to an agency for the collection, processing and dissemination of statistics, it also includes arrangement or procedures to facilitate data sharing and coordination between data producing". The purpose of data collection, analysis and report writing is for Developmental reasons and stakeholder engagement is the process that SDME is writing about and the focal stakeholders are the host communities.

It is clear from the few definitions above that Institutional Framework are the structures existing on ground that were created either in the past or present to be utilized in the right mix of

combinations to produce an intended results. Having defined Institutional Framework, it is necessary to proceed to define and understand community engagement according to CDC (1997) "Community Engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnership and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalyst for changing politics, programs, and practices".

According to Head (2007) community engagement and citizen-driven participation have long been important themes in liberal democratic theory, although managerial versions of liberal democracy have typically been dominant. In the past two decades, however, many countries have seen a shift away from a managerial or top-down approach, towards a revitalized emphasis on building institutional bridges between governmental leaders and citizenry, often termed community engagement.

Statement of the Problem

Several attempts at community engagement run into serious challenges due to either weak institutional or non-existing appropriate Institutional Framework. The ultimate purpose of community engagement is not only for community development but for sustainable community development. The only way it can be sustainable is if the people are part of its initiation, designing, implementation and management and the platform, vehicle and process of making or facilitating their involvement is the available Institutional Framework. Are these structures in place? And if they are not in place? Why are they not in place and what are the impacts of their not being in place and how can this be urgently remedied to revamp the stunted and troubled community engagement process and its negative impacts on the development process of society? There are conflicts resulting in violence in the development process and the answers to three questions will provide the solutions to end conflicts in communities, particularly oil and gas communities.

According to Castillo (2008, p.254), "most of the problems in implementing effective post-conflict reconstruction have to do with poor Institutional arrangement and 'weak institutions. A poor Institutional Framework is a serious constraint on economic policy-making" and it is a serious challenge and developmental problem in our communities requiring a serious effort through research to stem the tide of conflicts, discontinuities and abandoned projects.

Many projects and programmes in developing countries have either failed or have run into problems because of weak Institutional Framework which is the initiating, designing and delivering aspects of the failed or failing projects and programmes. The immediate and direct primary beneficiaries of a project that are the proximate sufferers of the impacts of the project should be part of the project from the beginning as they know the terrain and seasons and It is not only the direct beneficiaries alone that should be part of the project but also the indirect beneficiaries that will suffer some damages and consequences.

The involvement of the beneficiaries called the target groups can be achieved in the engagement of the communities. They know what they want and if they are not properly engaged, there will be

problems of lack of support, sabotage, and stakeholder apathy which will lead to making the project not to be sustainable. Most of the failed projects are foreign or externally imposed projects that were imposed on the people. In systems of Government, third world countries also borrow from the developed countries without looking at the foreign environment and their local environment with different peculiarities that will not allow for wholesome adoption, but rather the implementation with modifications is what is ideal. The same problem in the political arena is also what is experienced in other sectors as politics and the economy are integrated as Harold Laswell's definition of politics as the decision of who gets what, what is gotten and when it is gotten are all economic decisions. It is the political class that makes policies and decisions on project initiation, designing, implementation and maintenance in the urban and rural communities and most of the time, they do these on their own without the involvement of the communities and it creates problems that lead to violence and socioeconomic disruptions.

The issues and challenges of not involving the community in their developmental affairs can only be addressed with proper engagement of the indigenes of the communities to know what is suitable for them and how best to go about it, that is not done. The statement of problem therefore is to show these critical challenges facing policymakers on one hand and the communities on the other hand in the current dominant approach of not carrying the communities along in capturing their inputs and how it has contributed to mass failures of project & programs and how this can be averted (Hart, 2023).

Aim and Objectives of the study

The primary aim of the study is to examine those critical issues and challenges facing ongoing and completed projects arising from the inappropriate engagement of the communities by weak delivery mechanisms in the existing uncoordinated Institutional Framework from 1999-2023. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. investigate the institutional framework for sustainable community engagement for development in Nigeria
- ii. analyze the nature and characteristics of institutional frameworks in Nigeria and their impact on the success or failure of developmental projects in both urban and rural settings.
- iii. identify and evaluate the key challenges faced by these institutional frameworks in terms of community engagement and effective service delivery, with a focus on their implications for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research questions were stated to guide the study:

- i. what are the institutional framework for sustainable community engagement for development in Nigeria?
- ii. How do the inherent characteristics of institutional frameworks contribute to the systemic failure of developmental projects in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria?
- iii. What are the primary challenges faced by institutional frameworks in engaging communities and delivering services effectively for sustainable development in Nigeria?

Significance of Study

The study will be important as it will help to bring out the issues, problems and challenges of weak and inappropriate delivery mechanisms for community engagement in the community development process. This will also lead to recommendations on how these challenges can be addressed to ensure that there is community buy-into their development process. Secondly, the existing institutions and the process for community engagement are not producing the requisite results and the urgent need to see the possible result-oriented changes that can be made to reverse the present situation made this study to be significant. The current system of top-to-bottom Non-participatory Rural and urban appraisal has not given the desired peace in Nigeria and there is a need to change the situation by identifying the real problems and proffering solutions to them.

Scope of Study

This study is on issues, challenges and prospects concerning the appropriateness of the existing delivery mechanisms and processes for community engagement in Nigeria, from 1999-2023. This is with a view to see how it can be effective in sustainable community development. The existing status and future road map for efficient delivery are the focus.

Conceptional Clarification

Institutional Framework

Institutional theory is an intensive and durable part of social structure that deals with structures, organs, roles, rules, the sum totality of the way of life of a people in their culture, their schedules and routines. It is the dominant standard for social conduct. Institutional theory therefore defines the structures of society by beaming its searchlight on the political, social and economic sectors in which the people carry out their daily activities (Hart, 2022).

According to Cole and Mccarron (2022), "institutionalism is an approach to economics, anthropology, and other fields that focuses on the role of organizations and institutions in shaping the world in various ways. Institutions are entities that are defined by rules, norms and social structures.' They went on to say that institutions themselves can act and change as circumstances change, they are saying that it is dynamic as change is a permanent feature in life.

There are several institutionists like Karl Polanyi, John Meyer and Brian Rowan and they defined Institutions in their understanding "It is the position of Polanyi that market forces of buying and selling did not bring about social integration". That it is not so, rather it is the norms, values and social institutions that produced a comprehensive and integrated economy. It is the institutions, organs and social formations that create stability in prices. In their contributions, John Meyer and Brian Rowan propounded and started the concept of institutional Isomorphism and this explains how closely related, similar bodies in the course of time, begin to resemble one another by either force, procedures, normative or mimetic.

Sustainable Development

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, RIO+20 A/RES/66/288 in addressing the institutional framework of engagement for sustainable development, identified gaps in the implementation of the Sustainable development agenda (Ihemeson, 2024; Hart, 2022). The Institutional Framework for sustainable development should integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner and enhance implementation interlalia; strengthening coherence, and coordination, avoiding duplication of efforts and reviewing progress in implementing sustainable development. Thus, the Framework should find common solutions related to global challenges to sustainable development.

The United Nations conference went further to say ‘we recognize that effective governance at the local, subnational national, regional and global levels representing the voices and interests of all are critical stakeholders for advancing sustainable development. The strengthening and reform of the institutional framework should not be an end in itself, but a means to achieve sustainable development (Ihemeson, 2024). We recognize that an improved and more effective institutional framework for sustainable development at the international level should be consistent with Rio principles and build on Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg plan of implementation. It stressed from the beginning and the end that national priorities and development strategies and priorities of developing countries must be the focal points.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper is anchored on the Marxian conflict theory and System approach.

Marxian Conflict Theory

According to Crossman (2019, p.1) "Conflict theory states that tensions and conflicts arise when resources, status and power are unevenly distributed between groups in society and that these conflicts become the engine for social change. In this conflict, power can be understood as control of material resources and accumulated wealth, control of politics and the Institutions that make up society (determined not just by class but by race, gender sexuality, culture, and religion among other things)" Nigeria like all developing nations is experiencing economic challenges that made resources to be few and status and power are unevenly distributed between the elites and masses and occasional flashpoints occur as reactions to perceived injustice. He went further to write that “conflict theory originated in the work of Karl Marx, who focused on the causes and consequences of class conflicts between the bourgeoisie and owners of the means of production and the capitalist, and the proletarians (the working class and the poor). Focusing on the economic, social and political implications of the rise of capitalist Europe".

Using this theory, the ruling class in Nigeria and other developing countries owns the means of production, controls the political class and decides what to do without consulting the community-based proletariat, the working, farming and unemployed class leading to violence, and youth's restiveness.

Supporting the earlier position that society is in conflict, Hayes (2022) reviewed Brain Barrier thus "conflict theory, first developed by Karl Marx, is a theory that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals try to maximize their wealth and power.

The ruling class at the helm of power tries its best to hold on to that power and uses it to impose its will in the choice of projects. Locations, designs and scope without involving the community leaders which create problems leading to violence. This is so as the needs of the people may not be prioritised or captured by the project's delivery process in a non-consultative inadequate engagement. All sectors of the society are interdependent on the other and if social exclusion is done of the critical stakeholder, there would be challenges as they will withdraw their support.

System Approach

According to Gordon (2022, p.1), "system approach is based on the generalization that everything is interrelated and interdependent. A system is composed of related and dependent elements which when in interaction, form a unitary whole. A system is simply an assemblage or combination of things or parts forming a complex whole. The communities are part of the federal, state and local governments' structures in the Nigerian system, their Non-engagement or their improper, inadequate and poor engagement invariably affects the output of the delivery process of the projects and programme according to Thakur (2022)" the system approach is an old concept and the approach stands on the assumption that breaking down of a complex concept into simple easy to understand units helps in better understanding of the complexity. Ludvig Vonbert Alanff first proposed the system approach under the name of general system theory." He went further to identify the major concepts of the system approach as follows:

- ✓ Holism- A change on any part or component of a system directly or indirectly (Boulding 1985, Litterer 1973, Von Bertalanffy 1968).
- ✓ Specialization: A whole system can be divided into granular (smaller easy to understand) components so that the specialized role of each component is appreciated
- ✓ Non-Summational: Every component (Subsystem/partial system) is of importance to the whole. It is therefore essential to understand the actions of each component to get a holistic perspective (Boulding 1985, Litterer 1973)
- ✓ Grouping: the process of specialization can create its own complexity by proliferating components with increasing specialization. To avoid this, it becomes essential to group related disciplines or sub-disciplines
- ✓ Coordination: the grouped components and sub-components need coordination. Without coordination, the components will not be able to work in a concerted manner and will lead to chaos. Coordination and control are very important concepts in the study of systems as without them, there will not be a unified holistic concept
- ✓ Emergent properties: This is an important concept as it means that the group of interrelated entities (components) has properties as a group that are not present in any individual

component. This is the holistic view of a system. For example, multicellular organisms exhibit characteristics as a whole which are not present in individual constituent parts like cells.

The system theory was used to show that the community is indispensable to the planning for its development and it must therefore be properly engaged as every part of the system is very important like federal, state and local governments in addition to all the components of a community. We have system solidarity, maintenance, boundaries and decay and all work to show that all components of the community are part of the institutional framework in the communities and the process of engagement must involve them as part of the components of one integrated system and when any part is neglected, there is bound to be problems and that is why we see issues and challenges because of the neglect of some critical parts of the system.

DISCUSSIONS

Institutional Framework for Sustainable Community Engagement for Development in Nigeria

The institutional framework for sustainable community engagement for development in Nigeria involves various structures and policies that are designed to facilitate effective participation of communities in their development processes. This framework encompasses different levels of governance and involves multiple stakeholders, including government bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and the private sector. Here are the key components of this framework:

Security Institutional Framework: Nigeria's administrative system for security is a key part of making it easier for communities to work together for progress. This structure is very important for making sure that inclusive development can work and that communities are active participants in the process instead of just receiving benefits. A strong security system is necessary to protect development projects, keep community members safe, and make sure that the results of development last

The Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Department of State Services, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps are some of the most important institutions in Nigeria's institutional security framework. Each has its own role and responsibility in keeping the country and its people safe. But for these groups to really help with community involvement for development, they need to make sure their work fits with human rights, community policing, and working together with stakeholders (Alemika, 2013). As an example, community police builds trust, teamwork, and mutual respect between security organisations and people in the neighbourhood. This way of thinking focuses on ways to stop problems before they happen, working together with the community, and finding solutions that work in each area. To make community involvement in development work, security agencies need to take a more community-focused approach and work closely with community members to find, rank, and fix security issues that could get in the way of development efforts (Owusu, Mensah, & Oduro, 2015).

Also, the rules and laws that guide security organisations need to support the rule of law, responsibility, and openness. By making these structures stronger, we can improve the credibility and efficiency of security services, making it easier for communities to get involved in development projects. This is why court changes and the creation of monitoring systems are very important for making sure that security staff follow the law and treat people with respect, protecting their rights and honour (Ibeanu & Luckham, 2007).

Government Institutions: In Nigeria, the role of federal ministries, particularly the Ministry of Community Development, Youth, and Sports, is crucial in architecting frameworks that catalyze community involvement in developmental initiatives. These institutions are tasked with the creation and dissemination of policies that encourage community-level participation, ensuring that local voices are integrated into the planning and execution phases of development projects. For example, the Ministry's policy initiatives often aim to empower youth and sports communities, providing platforms for these groups to contribute significantly to societal development. Such frameworks are designed not only to harness the potential of these demographics but also to ensure their active participation in community-building efforts, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards communal growth and progress (Federal Ministry of Nigeria, 2021).

Moreover, at the state and local levels, dedicated departments and agencies work in tandem with federal directives to implement community-centric development projects. They engage directly with communities, identifying specific needs and tailoring initiatives that resonate with local priorities. For instance, state governments collaborate with local NGOs and CBOs to facilitate development projects that are community-specific, ensuring relevance and effectiveness. Additionally, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and the office for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria play instrumental roles in mobilizing communities. They educate citizens on their crucial roles within the development paradigm and advocate for active engagement in SDG-related initiatives. These agencies serve as bridges, connecting national development goals with community aspirations, thereby ensuring that the developmental agenda is inclusive and comprehensive (Hart, 2022).

Through programmes like the NOA's community engagement initiatives, communities are informed, empowered, and mobilized to participate actively in Nigeria's development trajectory, aligning local efforts with national and global objectives (National Orientation Agency, 2022; SDG Nigeria, 2022). These instances underscore the multifaceted approach of Nigerian government institutions in fostering sustainable community engagement for development. By creating policies that encourage community participation, providing platforms for direct involvement, and educating communities on their developmental roles, these institutions ensure that development in Nigeria is a collaborative, inclusive, and community-driven process.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria have increasingly become pivotal actors in the country's development narrative, serving as essential

conduits between the government and local communities. By advocating for grassroots needs and priorities, these organizations ensure that the voices of marginalized or underrepresented communities are heard and considered in the development process. They play a vital role in identifying and articulating community needs to higher authorities, thereby influencing policy formulation and implementation. NGOs and CSOs engage in various capacity-building activities, equipping community members with necessary skills and knowledge to actively participate in development projects. They facilitate numerous training programs, workshops, and seminars focusing on enhancing local capacities in project management, leadership, and civic engagement. One notable instance is the work of the Development Initiative of West Africa (DIWA), which has been instrumental in empowering women in Nigerian communities through capacity-building programs aimed at fostering their active involvement in local governance and development (Development Initiative of West Africa, 2021).

Furthermore, NGOs and CSOs play a critical role in monitoring and evaluating government-led development initiatives to ensure they are implemented transparently and effectively. They act as watchdogs, holding government institutions accountable for their commitments and performance in community development projects. By conducting independent assessments and providing feedback, they help in identifying gaps, suggesting improvements, and ensuring that development outcomes align with community expectations and needs. Organizations such as Transparency International Nigeria and the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) have been at the forefront of promoting transparency and accountability in public sector operations. They scrutinize development projects and policies to ensure they meet the set standards and genuinely benefit the target communities. For example, CISLAC's work in monitoring the implementation of anti-corruption policies has significantly contributed to enhancing transparency in public sector dealings, directly impacting the effectiveness and credibility of development initiatives in Nigeria (Transparency International Nigeria, 2022; Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre, 2022).

These engagements illustrate the multifaceted role of NGOs and CSOs in fostering sustainable community engagement and ensuring that development initiatives are people-centered, transparent, and accountable. By facilitating community participation, enhancing local capacities, and ensuring accountability, these organizations contribute significantly to the overall effectiveness and sustainability of development efforts in Nigeria.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in Nigeria play a fundamental role in the fabric of local development, serving as the linchpin in the interaction between communities and broader developmental frameworks. They embody the grassroots level of engagement, ensuring that the community's voice is central to development discourse and action. By representing community interests, CBOs ensure that development initiatives are not only receptive to but are driven by, local needs and priorities. They stand as advocates for their communities, negotiating resources, and interventions that resonate with the specific aspirations and challenges of their populace. For instance, the Nigerian Community Development Network (NCDN) has been instrumental in channeling community voices into the national development agenda, ensuring that local perspectives shape policy and practice at higher levels of governance (Nigerian Community Development Network, 2021).

Moreover, CBOs are critical in mobilizing local resources, fostering a sense of ownership, and enhancing the sustainability of development projects. They catalyze community action, galvanizing local groups, and individuals to contribute to and participate in development initiatives. This mobilization is vital for the cultivation of local capacity and the fostering of resilient community structures that can sustain development momentum. For example, the Community Action Initiative in Nigeria has successfully mobilized communities across several states to participate actively in health and education projects, thereby enhancing the reach and impact of these initiatives (Community Action Initiative, 2021). Through their involvement in the planning, implementation, and monitoring stages, CBOs also ensure that development projects are transparent and accountable, reflecting the community's input and responding to its feedback. The role of CBOs in monitoring government projects is exemplified by the Transparency Community Network, which has facilitated community-led oversight in local infrastructure projects, ensuring they meet the quality standards and are delivered timely (Transparency Community Network, 2021).

These instances underscore the multifaceted contributions of CBOs to Nigeria's development landscape. As grassroots entities embedded within the communities, they offer invaluable insights, mobilize local resources and capacities, and ensure that development processes are participatory, inclusive, and aligned with local aspirations. Their active engagement is pivotal for the contextualization and success of development initiatives, demonstrating the critical importance of CBOs in fostering sustainable community development in Nigeria.

Private Sector: The private sector in Nigeria plays a significant role in fostering community development, leveraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to build strong, sustainable communities while aligning with their strategic business goals. Through CSR, companies go beyond their profit-making activities to contribute positively to societal progress, demonstrating corporate citizenship and responsibility. These initiatives often focus on areas critical to community development, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic empowerment, addressing specific local challenges and contributing to overall national development. For instance, the Nigerian Breweries Plc has been actively involved in various CSR initiatives, including providing educational scholarships, supporting healthcare systems, and promoting access to clean water, significantly impacting the communities they serve (Nigerian Breweries, 2021).

Moreover, partnerships between the private sector and communities often lead to more sustainable development outcomes, as they combine the resources and expertise of businesses with the local knowledge and insight of community members. These collaborations can take various forms, including public-private partnerships (PPPs), community engagement programs, and joint development projects, all aimed at achieving mutual benefits. For example, the Dangote Foundation has engaged in numerous partnerships with local communities across Nigeria, focusing on health, education, and economic empowerment initiatives that address pressing community needs while also fostering a positive business environment (Dangote Foundation, 2021). Such engagements not only contribute to community development but also enhance corporate reputation, build customer loyalty, and create a more favorable business environment.

The direct investment in community-driven projects by the private sector is another crucial avenue for fostering community development. When businesses invest in local projects, they contribute to job creation, skill development, and economic growth, which are essential for community sustainability. For example, the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) operates a community-driven development program that invests in local infrastructure, education, and healthcare, driving community progress and development while supporting the company's operations (Shell Nigeria, 2021). These investments demonstrate how the private sector can play a transformative role in community development, contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable economic growth pathway for Nigeria.

Legal and Policy Framework: The legal and policy framework in Nigeria serves as a critical backbone for facilitating and enhancing community engagement in development processes. Policies such as Nigeria's National Policy on Education, which promotes community participation in school management committees, exemplify the government's recognition of the importance of involving communities in educational development. Such participatory approaches are designed to ensure that education policies and programs are responsive to the needs and contexts of local communities, thereby increasing their effectiveness and sustainability. The inclusion of communities in decision-making processes related to education not only fosters a sense of ownership among community members but also enhances the relevance and responsiveness of educational initiatives. For instance, the implementation of this policy has led to more community-driven educational programs and increased local involvement in school governance, positively impacting educational outcomes and promoting community empowerment (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021).

Furthermore, the Nigerian Environmental Policy underscores the significance of community engagement in environmental sustainability, advocating for local participation in the management and conservation of natural resources (Hart, 2019; Hart, 2019). This policy framework recognizes that sustainable environmental management is unattainable without the active involvement of the communities who are most affected by environmental issues and who possess valuable indigenous knowledge and practices (Ihemeson, 2023). By encouraging community participation, the policy aims to harness this local expertise and ensure that environmental initiatives are grounded in the realities of those who live in close interaction with their natural surroundings. For example, community-based waste management initiatives have emerged as a result of this policy, where local communities actively participate in waste collection, recycling, and awareness campaigns, significantly contributing to environmental preservation and sustainability (Ministry of Environment, 2021). These examples illustrate the crucial role of legal and policy frameworks in providing the necessary foundation and guidance for effective community engagement in Nigeria's development. By clearly delineating roles, responsibilities, and processes for community participation, these frameworks help to institutionalize community engagement across various sectors, ensuring that development efforts are inclusive, participatory, and aligned with the principles of sustainable development (Hart, 2019).

To crown it all, the institutional framework for sustainable community engagement for development in Nigeria is multi-faceted, involving a collaborative approach among government

bodies, NGOs, CBOs, the private sector, and the legal/policy framework. For this framework to be effective, there must be strong coordination among these entities, a commitment to transparency and accountability, and an emphasis on empowering communities to take an active role in their development processes.

Nature, Institutional Framework, and the Systemic Failure of Developmental Projects in Urban and Rural Areas in Nigeria.

The institutional framework in Nigeria, integral to the governance and execution of developmental projects, serves as the backbone for both urban and rural development. Udemezue (2021) elucidates the historical and legal contexts that shape this framework, highlighting the multifaceted nature of corporate and development governance in Nigeria. In urban areas, for instance, this framework is pivotal in ensuring the effective enforcement of regulations that govern land use, building codes, and environmental compliance, which are fundamental to sustainable urban development. However, the inefficiencies within this system, such as bureaucratic delays, corruption, and lack of enforcement, often lead to the non-completion or poor execution of infrastructure projects. One notable example is the Eko Atlantic City project in Lagos, intended as a model of modern urban planning and environmental protection. Despite its ambitious vision, the project has faced criticism for issues related to environmental sustainability and displacement of local communities, reflecting the gaps between policy formulation and ground-level execution within Nigeria's institutional framework.

In rural Nigeria, the institutional framework's role extends to determining resource allocation, project prioritization, and community involvement in development initiatives. Despite the existence of policies aimed at enhancing rural infrastructure, such as roads, healthcare, and education facilities, the actual implementation often falls short. The reasons include inadequate funding, poor project monitoring, and limited community engagement, leading to suboptimal outcomes. A concrete instance is the Rural Access and Mobility Project (RAMP), which, although successful in some states, has seen varied results nationwide due to inconsistencies in institutional support and execution. Furthermore, the integration of rural communities into the developmental agenda often lacks the necessary inclusivity and engagement, resulting in projects that do not fully address the needs or potential of these areas. As such, while the institutional framework theoretically provides a structure for comprehensive development, its practical inefficiencies and the disconnect between policy and implementation continue to hamper the progress of developmental projects across Nigeria's diverse landscapes.

Legal and Regulatory Challenges in Developmental Projects

In Nigeria, the legal and regulatory frameworks provide essential scaffolding for developmental initiatives, ensuring they align with established standards and societal expectations. However, as Elikwu, Olujobi, and Yebisi (2023) articulate, the complexities inherent in these frameworks often introduce significant hurdles in executing developmental projects. For example, the protection of religious rights within the context of developmental activities underscores the broader challenge of harmonizing project objectives with diverse cultural and legal expectations. In urban settings, regulatory challenges manifest in disputes over land use and environmental compliance, which can

delay or halt critical infrastructure developments. A notable instance is the perennial land disputes in urbanized regions, often exacerbated by opaque legal processes and insufficient regulatory oversight, reflecting a broader issue of legal inconsistencies that can undermine project efficiency and equity (Okwelum, 2023; Bamidele & Idowu, 2023).

In rural areas, the inadequacies of legal frameworks become even more pronounced, with land tenure ambiguities and limited access to legal recourse stymying project advancement. The disputes over land rights not only affect agricultural productivity but also hamper infrastructural and social service delivery, crucial for rural development. The situation is further complicated by the often informal and customary nature of land ownership in these regions, which challenges the integration of traditional rights with formal legal structures. For instance, the effects of unresolved land disputes on food security in states like Nasarawa highlight the critical intersection of legal frameworks, property rights, and developmental outcomes, pointing to the need for legal reforms that recognize and integrate local realities and rights (Olorunfemi, Ibe, & Omale, 2021; Mohammed & Salihu, 2020).

Systemic Failures Impacting Urban Development

Systemic failures in urban development, particularly evident in rapidly growing cities like Lagos, exemplify the complexities and challenges that hamper sustainable urban growth in Nigeria. The city of Lagos, despite being an economic powerhouse, struggles with inadequate housing, inefficient waste management, and crumbling infrastructure, which collectively impede its development trajectory. Studies by Ibrahim et al. (2022) and Echendu (2021) offer insights into how urban sprawl and poor planning exacerbate quality of life in cities, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive urban planning and sustainable development strategies. For instance, the failure to effectively implement urban planning guidelines in Kaduna Metropolis has led to over-stretched amenities and infrastructure decay, reflecting broader systemic issues that plague urban development across Nigeria.

In addition to infrastructure woes, corruption and inadequate public-private partnerships (PPPs) significantly undermine urban development efforts. The relationship between urban planning and flooding in cities like Port Harcourt, as analyzed by Echendu (2021), illustrates how neglecting proper urban planning can lead to disastrous consequences. Moreover, Daramola et al. (2021) discuss how municipal administration complexities hinder urban planning functions, pointing to the need for legislative reforms to streamline and empower urban planning processes. These challenges are symptomatic of the broader systemic failures that necessitate a paradigm shift toward integrity, transparency, and efficiency in managing urban development projects.

Challenges in Rural Developmental Projects

Rural areas in Nigeria encounter distinct developmental challenges, significantly impeded by insufficient attention and resources. Projects designed to uplift rural infrastructure, healthcare, and education are pivotal but often face hurdles such as inadequate funding, which limits their scope and impact. Shehu, Yusoff, and Yusoff (2021) emphasize how electricity infrastructure development, underpinned by good governance, can catalyze rural development, indicating that

governance quality directly influences project success. Concurrently, Owigho et al. (2023) discuss the perceived effectiveness of rural infrastructure on farmers' livelihoods in Delta State, highlighting that a majority find government-provided infrastructure only moderately effective, pointing to a gap between project delivery and community expectations.

Moreover, the integration of technology in rural settings, as explored by Ogbo, Brown, and Sicker (2018), demonstrates how broadband accessibility can significantly influence internet usage and, by extension, educational and economic opportunities. However, the lack of such infrastructure can exacerbate the digital divide, underscoring the importance of tailored, community-specific developmental strategies. Similarly, Otekunrin's (2022) study on agricultural commercialization in Southwestern Nigeria reveals that less than half of the farmers had access to crucial amenities like electricity and piped water, impacting their productivity and market access, which are essential for rural economic development.

Component and Challenges of institutional frameworks for community engagement and service delivery for a sustainable development

Institutional frameworks for community engagement in service delivery are pivotal for fostering sustainable development. These frameworks typically comprise structures, policies, processes, and cultural elements designed to facilitate interaction between institutions and communities (Alam, Al Arif, & Rahman, 2020). Essential components include governance structures that define roles and responsibilities, policy guidelines that direct engagement practices, and processes that enable effective participation. For example, transparent decision-making processes and responsive feedback mechanisms are crucial for building trust and ensuring that community inputs translate into actionable outcomes. Furthermore, the cultural component, emphasizing values such as inclusivity, respect, and mutual understanding, underpins the efficacy of these frameworks, fostering an environment where community members feel valued and empowered to contribute to sustainable development initiatives (Ihemeson, 2024).

Formulating robust institutional frameworks for community engagement presents numerous challenges. One primary concern is the alignment of these frameworks with broader governance structures and policies (Prosper, 2021). Often, there is a mismatch between national policies and local implementation realities, leading to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness in community engagement efforts. Additionally, the dynamic and complex nature of community needs and expectations necessitates adaptive and flexible framework designs, which can be difficult to achieve in practice. Institutional resistance to change and the inertia of established processes can further impede the evolution of frameworks that are responsive to emerging community engagement needs and sustainable development goals.

While institutional frameworks for community engagement provide a structured approach to sustainable development, they face several challenges, such as maintaining flexibility, addressing power imbalances, and ensuring long-term commitment. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and improvement. Clifford and Petrescu (2012) discuss the internal, external, and personal dimensions of engagement, indicating the complexity of building sustainable relationships. Similarly, Reed et al. (2014) emphasise the importance of trust, shared

norms, and effective communication in community engagement practices, highlighting the potential for collaborative learning and collective action. These insights reveal that addressing the challenges inherent in institutional frameworks can lead to more robust and resilient engagement strategies, ultimately contributing to sustainable development goals.

Operationalizing community engagement in service delivery involves translating policy intentions into concrete actions that resonate with the community's needs and aspirations. Establishing clear mechanisms for community input requires creating accessible channels for feedback, consultation, and participation, ensuring that community voices are heard and integrated into decision-making processes. Kernaghan (2009) emphasizes the potential of Integrated Service Delivery (ISD) organizations to use their local presence to foster meaningful community engagement, enhancing service delivery through collaborative partnerships. Similarly, Konsti-Laakso and Rantala (2017) discuss a process model for community engagement in urban planning, demonstrating how structured approaches can facilitate stakeholder participation and reduce conflicts, ultimately leading to more sustainable urban development. These instances underline the necessity of embedding community engagement within organizational processes, ensuring that policies are not only declared but actively implemented and reflected in service outcomes.

Operational challenges such as resource constraints, lack of capacity, and inadequate feedback mechanisms can impede the effectiveness of community engagement initiatives. To overcome these hurdles, institutions must prioritize capacity building, ensuring that staff are equipped with the necessary skills and resources to engage with communities effectively. The work of Midgley, Johnson, and Chichirau (2017) on Community Operational Research highlights the importance of meaningful engagement, suggesting that different forms of engagement can address specific community needs and contexts. Additionally, Davis, et al. (2020) provide insights into facilitating community engagement through service-learning, illustrating how educational institutions can support community service while enhancing student learning. These examples highlight the need for adaptable strategies that account for varying community contexts and institutional capacities, ensuring that engagement efforts are both effective and sustainable.

Sustainability and consistency are critical for maintaining trust and commitment in community engagement initiatives. Institutions must develop long-term strategies that embed engagement within their core operations, ensuring that efforts are not sporadic but part of a sustained commitment to community partnership. The findings from Oanh (2020) emphasize the role of community engagement in fostering social cohesion and capital, highlighting the necessity for ongoing interaction and network building. Sheridan and Patrick (2010) outline a framework for strategic community engagement, emphasizing the need for systematic integration of engagement activities across service planning and delivery stages. These insights underline the importance of continuity and strategic planning in community engagement, ensuring that initiatives not only address immediate needs but also contribute to long-term partnership building and community empowerment. For institutional frameworks to remain relevant and effective, they must be adaptable and capable of learning from past experiences. This involves regular monitoring and evaluation of engagement activities, incorporating lessons learned into future planning, and being open to modifying approaches based on community feedback and changing circumstances.

However, establishing a culture of learning and adaptability within institutions can be challenging, particularly in environments resistant to change or where there is a lack of accountability and reflection on past actions.

Technology offers significant potential to enhance community engagement and service delivery, providing innovative platforms for information sharing, consultation, and collaboration. However, integrating technology into institutional frameworks poses challenges, including ensuring equitable access, addressing privacy concerns, and overcoming the digital divide that may exclude certain community segments (Smith, 2018).

FINDINGS

1. The institutional framework for sustainable community engagement in Nigeria comprises various entities, including government bodies, the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Department of State Services, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and the local security groups, the ANGOs, CSOs, CBOs, and the private sector, each playing pivotal roles in fostering community participation in development initiatives. Government institutions at federal, state, and local levels enact policies and create platforms for community involvement, while NGOs and CSOs bridge gaps between governmental bodies and communities, advocating for community needs and facilitating capacity building. CBOs represent local interests directly, and the private sector contributes through CSR initiatives, all integral to embedding community engagement within the development paradigm.
2. The characteristics of institutional frameworks in Nigeria, such as bureaucratic inefficiency, lack of transparency, and inadequate resource allocation, often contribute to the systemic failure of development projects. In both urban and rural settings, these flaws can lead to mismanagement, corruption, and the exclusion of vital community input, undermining project outcomes. Moreover, the lack of coordination among various institutional actors and insufficient community representation in planning and implementation processes can result in initiatives that are misaligned with local needs and unsustainable over the long term.
3. Primary challenges faced by institutional frameworks in Nigeria include political interference, resource constraints, and inadequate community involvement in the decision-making process. These issues hamper effective service delivery and sustainable development, as they prevent institutions from responding adeptly to community needs, undermine public trust, and limit the capacity for local empowerment. Moreover, the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms impedes the ability to assess impacts accurately and make necessary adjustments, further constraining the success of development initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The institutional framework for sustainable community engagement in Nigeria is a complex system involving multiple stakeholders who are essential for integrating community perspectives into development processes. However, the effectiveness of this framework is contingent upon the

seamless collaboration and coordination among its diverse components. Strengthening these connections and ensuring that each entity effectively fulfills its role are critical for embedding community engagement into the fabric of Nigeria's development strategy, thereby enhancing the relevance and sustainability of development initiatives.

Systemic issues within the institutional framework, such as inefficiencies, lack of transparency, and resource limitations, significantly hinder the success of development projects across Nigeria. Addressing these inherent characteristics is vital for preventing project failures and ensuring that development efforts lead to tangible and lasting benefits for communities. This requires a concerted effort to reform key institutional processes, enhance accountability, and ensure that development strategies are both responsive and tailored to the nuanced needs of different communities.

Finally, overcoming the primary challenges facing institutional frameworks in Nigeria demands a multifaceted approach that includes bolstering political will, enhancing resource allocation, and fostering genuine community participation. By addressing these critical issues, Nigeria can improve the effectiveness of its institutional frameworks, thereby ensuring more equitable and effective service delivery and facilitating sustainable development outcomes that are truly reflective of and beneficial to its diverse communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There should be harmonization of the plans of the federal, state and local governments in all communities through robust intergovernmental cooperation and there should also be linkages and coordination with non-state actors like development partners, civil society and traditional institutions through An All-Inclusive Stakeholders Engagement Process.
2. To achieve this, there should be an institutionalized legal framework for community engagement in the carving of a role for traditional institutions in the constitution to enable and empower them to be part of the engagement, initiation, implementation and evaluation process of their development. To actualize this, The Paramount Traditional Ruler of every local government, the chairman of the CDC and a representative of NGO should be legally mandated to be part of the engagement process in the evaluation and formulation, implementation and evaluation of the project.
3. There should be statutory provision for federal and state governments to conduct a mandatory needs assessment before carrying out any project and also to involve the benefiting communities in the implementation of projects in their communities to ensure inclusiveness and sustainability.
4. There should be improved funding for rural projects to discourage rural-urban migration in the oil producing communities.

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