

Participation of Citizens in Rural and Urban Governance: A Situational Analysis of Nigeria (2011-2014)

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Abstract

The paper examined participation of citizens in rural and urban governance: A situational analysis of Nigeria. The ultimate objectives is to encourage the citizens to take active part and freely get involved in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare as well as to stimulate people's ability to draw on the local human and material resources to meet local needs. Data were collected and analysed through historical and descriptive methods. The theoretical perspective of this paper centered on democratic participatory school. The kinds of citizens' participation that warrant major concern should be: participation in decision-making; participation in implementation; participation in benefits; and participation in evaluation of development projects. The benefit of citizens' participation in governance is that it brings government closer to the people and also stimulates the exploitation of local resources through self-help. However, the problems associated with this are inadequate finance, corruption and bad government. The paper therefore, recommends that there should be a well-structured people-oriental partnership between the citizens in rural and urban areas at all levels of governments.

Introduction

From recorded history, it has been observed that man has always sought for effective management of his welfare. This is in line with his characteristics as a **rational** being. It is generally acknowledged that no government, however wealthy, can provide everything for its people. It is necessary for the people to complement the efforts of government by providing some of their needs themselves. The former Anambra State Edict No. 22 of 1986 as cited from Obi (2001:150) aptly outlined the objective of participation of citizens in rural and urban governance as follows:

1. Sensitizing and mobilizing the entire people of the state particularly at the grassroots level and consciously and actively involving them in effective rural and urban development, and
2. Encouraging integrated and multi-dimensional measures to rural development through village integration whenever it is considered relevant.

There have been cases of categorization of good and bad governance, national, state and local governance, urban and rural governance, corporate and international governance

etc. The main objectives of all these governance types, levels or actors are the maintenance of the common good. In this respect, common good connotes a just and egalitarian society, governed on the principles of justice, with domination of majority interests, the protection of minority rights and the overall development of the society, its members and its institutions.

This paper will examine the objectives of participation of citizens in rural and urban governance, the various mechanisms through which citizens could participate in governance, impacts of participation of citizens, problems, challenges and recommendations.

Clarifications of some key concepts

It is pertinent at this onset to clarify some working definitional aspects of this paper.

Governance: The concept of governance for the purposes of this paper reflects the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic; political and social resources for development objectives. In concurring with this assertion, the United Nations Development Programme UNDP (1997:10) states that:

Governance can be seen as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, the processes and institutions, through which citizens and group articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

From the above definition, governance is not restricted to governmental machineries alone. In this respect, governance concept here includes all other actors in governance at whatever level, groups, institutions or organizations. Rural and urban governance therefore involves other actors 'other than Government such as Federal and State Agencies and Officials, Association of Peasant's Farmers, Association of Small Scale Entrepreneurs, Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations. Religious Organizations, Local Trade Union Organizations, Micro-Finance Banks, Association of Daily Wage labourers, all formal and informal sector workers, all Community-Based Organizations, International Donor and Companies, the Local Government and appointed local officials etc., **Participation of Citizens:** This is refers to the involvement of the citizens of a state in formulation and implementation of policies for their governance and their participation in the choice of their leaders (Oyeneye, et al, 1995). But Okolie (2004) states that participation of citizens implies "the expressive right to rule, freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, influence, decision process, and right to social justice. It also expresses such rights to demand for better social conditions, and increase in welfare". Okolie stresses that in participation of citizens, individuals are expected to be part of efforts to achieve political stability by paying taxes, rendering labour services when needed, as well as being obedience to law etc.

Davies (1963) in his own perception simply defines participation of citizens "as taking part in the making of the basic decisions as to what are, the common goals of one's society and as to the best ways to move towards these goals". Therefore, participation of citizens in governance expresses actions, interactions, reaction and role expectations as

one find oneself as integral member of a society. It involves citizens' engagement in the political activities of their state.

In democracies as well as in other national political systems, individuals vary significantly in the extent to which they exercise influence and seek to exercise influence over the government of their state (Dahl, 2003). Against this background participation of citizens in rural and urban governance can thus be classified into three types namely; **full or active participation:** This is the type in which citizens actively take part in the process and political affairs of their state. **A partial participation:** It is the type in which citizens are partially involved in the political and economic process of their state. This type of participation could be coterminous with what Almond and Verba in their popular book: **Civic culture** (1963) described as "subjects" in the political system. **A passive participation:** This exists where citizens are interested in political and economic processes only at the level of being observers.

Democratic Participatory Theory

This paper applied democratic participative theory. The democratic participative theory assumes at the most general level the participation of those who will be affected by the decisions, ensures participation in process and maintains that the rationality of the decision depends on their inclusion. Participation often involves consultation.

The exponents of this theory believe that local government exists to bring about democracy in the rural areas and to create opportunities for local people to participate in democracy. This school of thought emphasized political education. Robert Dahl and Sharp L.P were among the exponents of this theory. This democratic participatory theory emphasizes the value of representative government.

The Scope of Participation of Citizens in Rural and Urban Governance

The World Bank looks at governance as the tradition and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for common good. This includes:

1. The process by which those who govern are selected, monitored and replaced.
2. The capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies and
3. The respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them. Governance according to Otagburuagu (2010:10) revolves around two levels-the macro and the micro levels. The macro level relates to issues about the laws of the land, the three arms of government, economic and natural resources and their management. At the micro-level, issues about commercial activities, ministries and parastatals, NGOs, the organized private sector and the civil society come into focus. What happens at one level affects the other.

In all the examination and assessment of participation of citizens in rural and urban governance in Nigeria involves the main tenets of decision making and implementation that encompass characteristics of good governance, such as popular participation, existence of rule of law, transparency in administration, administrative responsiveness, consensus orientations, equity and inclusiveness, administrative effectiveness and public accountability. Other components of the grass root governance are civil society

empowerment, democratic and judicial reforms and use of home-grown grass root modalities for effective social services delivery and development.

The Objectives of Participation of Citizens in Governance

Objectives of participation of citizens in rural and urban governance in Nigeria among others include the following:

1. Effective promotion of a framework for rural and urban social mobilization.
2. To link the rural and urban communities to local government, local government to state and states to the federal government.
3. To improve the level of social and political consciousness of the people.
4. To stimulate people's ability to draw on the local (human and material) resources to meet local needs.
5. Encourage the people to take part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare.

Mechanisms of Participation of Citizens in Rural and Urban Governance

In order to achieve an accelerated pace of participation of citizens in rural and urban governance the following mechanisms or channels should be adopted. They are:

- a. Elections-being a voter or candidate,
- b. Serving in government in any capacity.
- c. Referendum and plebiscite.
- d. Expression of opinion in the media.
- e. Membership of political parties.
- f. Pressure group activities, and
- g. Membership of any legitimate or constitutionally recognized associations or organizations.

Through these means the fundamental questions of policies are decided by the people after adequate consultations and discussion. This is what Rodee et al (1957) called self-government or "government by consent" which operates with the principle of majority rule and the respect of the will of the minority.

Participation of Citizens in Governance through NEEDS, SEEDS and LEEDS

The participation of citizens in rural and urban governance in Nigeria is the experimentation of LEEDS, i.e. Local Economic Empowerment Development Strategy Programme integrated in the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) and which also extends down to State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS). LEEDS is expected to serve as a vehicle that would strengthen the delivery of economic goodies at the local government levels. The programme started in 2006 and is still on course. The dynamics of the LEEDS governance system involves the promotion of grass root development and poverty alleviation, through the participation of key stakeholders, as the local government officials, the various civil society organizations, the private sector groups, traditional and community leaders, women and the local government administrators. Thus the principle guiding the LEEDS in Nigeria includes citizens' equality, societal democracy in

governance and people-oriented development framework. There are lots of benefits to be accrued from LEEDS policy.

Women and Political Participation

Over the years, the issue of women's participation in politics has dominated public discourse not only in Nigeria, but also in Africa and the world at large. Several obstacles have been identified that generally prevent women from advancing to political positions. Some of them are: socio-cultural beliefs, finance, nature of political party formation, biases and stereotypes (The Guardian, 15 February, 27-2014). Women in Nigeria have been historically marginalized in politics dating back to pre-colonial time. For instance, men started voting in elections in Nigeria in 1922, while women voted across the country in an election for the first in 1979; 77 years after men had started voting.

Cultural and religious values of civilization tend to assign more or less rigidly-specific roles and tasks to men and to women, hence limit women's participation in political life or even exclude them from politics. It should be possible without destabilizing cultures or imposing foreign values to enhance women's dignity at the political and social levels and allow the emergence of a more balanced participation in politics between men and women in Nigeria.

However, there is a growing recognition of the untapped capacity of women and women's leadership. Accordingly, the rate of women's representation in national parliaments globally has grown from 13.1% in 1999 to 18.6% at the end of 2009. While the number of women in parliaments in Africa is said to have increased from 10.9% in 1999, to 17.6% in 2009, there has not been significant improvement in women representation in national parliaments since 1999 till date (The Guardian February, 29, 2014).

Following the 2011 elections, Nigeria has only 32 women in National Assembly out of 469 members, representing just 7%. To ensure increased women political participation in the 2015 elections and beyond, Nigeria women gathered in Abuja to fashion out modalities for increasing role of women in all political parties and map out strategies for ensuring grass root mobilization in favour of female candidates in 2015 elections and

he Guardian, February 27, 2014, President Goodluck Jonathan said:

hat his administration had encouraged women participation in politics through appointments into political offices, adding that apart from the accomplishments of women's rise to the pinnacle of their profession. For the first time, Nigeria has a woman as the Chief Justice of the federation; Nigeria has the first time, female pilot in the Nigerian Air Force, women combatant in the Nigerian military. This is a demonstration that women have come of age.... Nigeria needs more political

education and enlightenment to encourage women participation in politics

**INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION
OSUN STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION, AUGUST 9, 2014.**

DECLARATION OF RESULTS

NAME OF STATE: OSUN

CODE: OS

S/N	CONTESTANT	GENDER	PARTY	VOTES RECEIVED	REMARK
1	BARR. NIYI OWOLADE	MALE	A	377	
2	BABATUNDE ORALUSI	MALE	AA	379	
3	MR. FEMI ADELEKE	MALE	ACPN	4,370	
4	SENATOR SUNDAY FAJINMI	MALE	AD	1,982	
5	COMRADE GABRIEL G. OJO	MALE	ADC	1,783	
6	ALHAJI AGBOOLA A. OBASANJO	MALE	APA	3,306	
7	OGBENI RAUF A. AREGBESOLA	MALE	APC	394,684	ELECTED
8	AKINTUNDE A. ADETUNJI	MALE	APGA	806	
9	ALH. RAFIU S. ANIFOWOSE	MALE	CPP	1,087	
10	ALHAJI FATAI AKINBADE	MALE	LP	8,898	
11	CHIEF BABATUNDE ADETORO	MALE	MPPP	249	
12	COM. AFOLAYANKA O. JIMOH	MALE	NCP	457	
13	PRINCE ADEFARE S. ADEGOKE	MALE	NNPP	493	
14	OLUDARE TIMOTHY AKINOLA	MALE	PDM	1,909	
15	SENATOR IYIOLA OMISORE	MALE	PDP	292,747	
16	ALHAJI LAWAL G. ABIODUN	MALE	PPA	2,628	
17	ELDER OLUSEGUN AKINWUSI	MALE	SDP	534	
18	MR. BUNMI FUNSO	MALE	UDP	261	
19	ADEOTI IBRAHIM ABIODUN	MALE	UPN	212	
20	PRINCE VICTOR O. ADENIYI	MALE	UPP	159	

a	TOTAL NUMBER OF REGISTERED VOTERS	1,411,373
b	TOTAL NUMBER OF ACCREDITED VOTERS	764,582
c	TOTAL NUMBER OF VALID VOTES	717,321
d	TOTAL NUMBER OF REJECTED VOTES	32,700
e	TOTAL NUMBER OF VOTES CAST	750,021

f | PERCENTAGE TURN OUT

54.17%

Ekiti/Osun 2014 Polls:

The two states in the South-West zone of Nigeria have witnessed two staggered elections. The first one was in Ekiti State, on June 21, 2014 while the second was held in Osun State on August, 2014.

A critical look at the two governorship elections would reveal that they have some similarities and at the same time, some differences, with the conduct, results as well as with the dramatis personae involved in the exercise.

Political parties and candidates

The two parties involved were similar. They are the All Peoples Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). While the APC presented sitting governors to run for second term in office, the PDP also presented a former governor and a former deputy governor. In the case of the PDP in Ekiti State, former Governor Ayo Fayose flew his party's flag, while former Deputy Governor Iyiola Omisore was presented for the Osun Poll. Interestingly both Fayose and Omisore were at different times impeached from office.

On the platform of the APC, incumbent Governors, Kayode Fayemi and Rauf Aregbesola were its candidates for Ekiti and Osun States respectively. Fayose attended a Polytechnic as well as Aregbesola. In the case of Fayemi and Omisore, both parade doctoral degrees (Ph.D.). (Daily Sun, August 11, 2014). Both PDP candidates emerged through party primaries in Ekiti and Osun. And interestingly, both Fayose and Omisore are rightly or wrongly perceived as men of strong character with some myths woven around their personalities.

Although Fayemi is an intelligent orator, he is not seen as a man-of-the-people with high level of native intelligence that makes him a thorough bred grassroots politician. So, while Fayose is always a home with roadside corn and roasted plantain as well as riding Okada at will, Fayemi appears too urban for that, as he thinks that performance has nothing to do with where you eat and what you ride. However, both of them are performance personified.

In the case of Aregbesola and Omisore, while Aregbesola insists that he is a man of-the-people with a difference, Omisore appears a bit reserved, but accommodating. Aregbesola is so much a man-of-the-people that he has become a Fuji vocalist. As he sings, he also dances to his own music, the reason his campaign venues were always jam-packed.

The Benefits of Participation of Citizens in Rural and Urban Governance

1) It Fosters Mass Participation: In order to achieve an accelerated pace of development, the people are widely mobilized for the purpose of development. They contribute not only material and labour, but also ideas. The people are allowed to participate fully both in the planning and execution of policies and development projects. The input of support is maximized and personality growth is fully assured when there is complete mass participation (Ogunna, 2007:13). This idea of mass participation in governance stimulates great psychological satisfaction in the minds of the people.

2) It Encourages People's Initiative: The people determine by themselves their "felt needs" through their own political and administrative machinery, make a detailed and purposeful plan of these needs and finally use their available resources for the execution of their plan.

3) Effective Leadership: Effective leadership is an indispensable factor in policy initiation, decision and projects development. The planning, execution of development projects, coordination, direction and supervision of the people's desired goals are to be met.

Other benefits include:

- * Bringing government closer to the people.
- * Recognition of cultural diversity and the use of traditional political structure.
- * Exploitation of local resources through self - help.

An enlightened and effective leadership elected or appointed by the people themselves supplies the system with this vital requirement. The people can be adequately mobilized if there is a leader capable of inspiring his people. An enlightened leadership is a positive catalyst to the grassroots governance.

Problems

Participation of citizens in governance is being confronted with numerous problems which have constituted a stumbling block in its wheel of progress, thereby preventing rapid rural and urban transformation. These problems are.

(1) Inadequate Finance: Finance is the lubricating oil without which the engine of an organization cannot move or perform. Finance is very crucial and indispensable in grassroots governance. Some rural communities and urban cities are in very deplorable state of underdevelopment. A lot of development projects need to be urgently planned and executed to make them conducive and habitable. Most rural communities and urban cities lack good roads and bridges, good and adequate medical facilities, adequate school blocks and facilities for the teeming population. All these problems involve capital development projects which involves billion of Naira.

(2) Conflict and Tension Among Citizens: Apart from finance, the greatest problem facing people today is conflict, which is both internal and external. These problems bordering on conflicts and tensions are;

- a) Intra and inter- community conflict
- b) Chieftaincy disputes
- c) Conflicts between traditional ruler and community Association and
- d) Conflict among the people and community association

(3) Corruption: Corruption has affected the entire fabric of the Nigerian society. As such is found in varying degrees in rural and urban areas. For the purpose of this paper corruption involves the diversion of public funds and materials for personal enrichment, misappropriation of public funds which occur among the leaders, embezzlement of people's money etc.

(4) Bad Government: This is another crucial problem confronting citizens' participation in governance. Whenever a government is unresponsive, insensitive to the problem and needs of the people, dictatorial, ineffective and unproductive, it loses its support by the people. Its creditability and legitimacy are equally lost. This unhealthy development as result of bad government hinders citizens' participation in governance.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the participation of citizens in rural and urban governance and analysed it with certain periods in Nigeria. The concept of governance must carry with it the appellation of "good" if it is in to be of contemporary relevance. The predated modern economic management has largely contributed to the development of such political philosophy as the popular participation, the separation of powers>the rule of law and fair hearing which simply is the legal equivalent of due process. One major importance of this paper is that it is people - oriented. It has to be positively oriented towards satisfying the needs of the people in specific target groups like rural communities and urban cities. The people are not passive beneficiaries; they are the active participants in policy formulation and development projects for the public welfare.

Recommendations

Following the assessment and contents of this study, the paper therefore recommends that:

- 1) There should be a well-structured people oriented partnership between the citizens in rural and urban areas at all levels of government. This proviso engenders participation of the citizens in governance.
- 2 There is need for enhanced internal democracy in the affairs of the people. This would encourage self - regulatory mechanism that would increase transparency and accountability in service delivery.
- 3] The electoral process should be revisited with the imperatives of reforming the grassroots politics, by ensuring electoral transparency to reflect citizens' interest and aspirations.
- 4] Finally, community-based organizations should be represented in formal governmental structures like the local government councils as agents of developments and poverty reduction programmes to reflect their needs.

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