

Effectiveness of the Community Driven Development Approach for facilitating grassroots development: Lessons from the Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project (LEEMP) in Nigeria

Fadairo O. S. and M. K. Yahaya

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development,
University of Ibadan
dairom2@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The need to document the strength and weakness of Community Driven Development (CDD) approach being used for development programmes with the aim of improving its effectiveness for engendering community ownership of projects and sustainability necessitated this study. The study investigated the effectiveness of the CDD approach for facilitating grassroots development; drawing lessons from Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project (LEEMP) in Nigeria. Study was conducted in three LEEMP participating States of Adamawa, Bauchi and Imo. Data was collected using in-depth interview (IDI) with key informants and field observation of LEEMP processes. Data collection covered LEEMP processes starting from community mobilization through project implementation. CDD strategy was effective in generating the interest of the people in the community development efforts of LEEMP. This was evident by the zero level of resistance to development intervention observed in all communities of study and the ease at which community members keyed into project ideas and also rallied support for the intervention. The CDD approach of LEEMP through ceding of the steering of Project implementation to the benefiting communities was observed to be very effective in ensuring community ownership of LEEMP assisted projects. However, the crucial strategy of LEEMP to build local capacity through its CDD approach was not realized to an appreciable extent. In conclusion, the CDD procedures of LEEMP development interventions are effective in Nigeria communities. Importantly, the level of LEEMP goal attainment of achieving social inclusiveness and ensuring that projects are driven by the beneficiaries can be adjudged as above average.

Keywords: Community Driven Development, Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project, Ownership, Social inclusion.

INTRODUCTION

The community-driven development (CDD) approach has become a key strategy used by both government and development assistance programs (World Bank, 2006). The popularity of the CDD approach has been propelled by its potential to develop projects and programs that are sustainable and responsive to local priorities, empower local communities to manage and govern their own development programs, and more effectively target poor and vulnerable groups (World Bank, 2005). Empirical evidence of the effectiveness of CDD in achieving these objectives is mixed (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). Among the interesting questions capturing the attention of scholars are the sustainability of

donor-supported CDD and its effectiveness in targeting the poor and vulnerable. Alesina and Eliana (1999) observed that projects managed by communities were more sustainable than those managed by local governments because of better maintenance. However, Brown *et al* (2002) and OED (2005) found that CDD projects that lacked external institutional, financial, and technical support were not sustainable. Targeting the poor has been one of the challenges of development and emergency response programs (Arcand and Bassole 2007). One argument in favor of CDD asserts that it can improve targeting because CDD projects make better use of local knowledge to define and identify the targeted groups (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). However, empirical evidence is

mixed concerning the effectiveness of targeting using the CDD approach. One review concluded that in heterogeneous communities with high social inequality, the performance of CDD projects in targeting has been worse than that of externally managed programs (Barron, Smith, and Woolcock 2004). However, the review also revealed that in egalitarian communities with open and transparent systems of decision making, targeting was better with CDD than with development approaches using external project management.

This study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of a CDD project called Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project (LEEMP), which is one of the largest community development projects in Nigeria. The LEEMP project aims to reduce poverty by supporting communities to develop multi-sectoral micro-projects, increasing the capacity of communities to manage economic activities, and reducing environmental problems. This report evaluates how the project affected the capacity of beneficiaries to manage CDD projects and how the project through its CDD approach has been able to engender community ownership and participation. This report also examine whether the project succeeded in targeting the poor and the vulnerable through its social inclusion strategy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of the CDD approach for facilitating grassroots development; using the Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project (LEEMP) in Nigeria as case study. The specific objectives include to:

- (i) document the processes involved in the articulation and implementation of LEEMP community driven development programme; and
- (ii) give an overall assessment of the current processes being used for LEEMP's project delivery.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in three LEEMP participating states of Adamawa, Bauchi and Imo. In each of the participating states, one local government area was randomly selected from each of the three senatorial districts to make a total of three local government areas. One community was further selected from each of the selected local government areas to arrive at the three main communities of focus for each state. Thus, three communities were selected from each

of the states to make a total of 9 communities. The study population comprised of all individuals and groups who participated in the implementation of micro-projects in the communities. These include the Operation Officers (OOs) and other project officials from State project support units (SPSUs), members of the community project implementation committees (CPMCs), other members of the benefiting communities and local government desk officers. Primary and secondary data were used to fulfill the objectives of the study. Primary data for the study were generated using the qualitative research design such as in-depth interviews (IDIs) with key informants and field observation. Secondary data were also collected from the CPMCs (minutes of meetings), SPSUs and the Local Government Area (LGA) desk offices in the study areas to provide a back-up for the information garnered from the primary sources.

The data collection procedure was achieved by posting 2 observers who had been trained on process documentation research and methodology to each of the study communities. The field data covered the LEEMP community –driven development processes as specified in the LEEMP operational guidelines. These includes community entrance, sensitization and mobilization, participatory rural appraisal, CPMC election, training of CPMC on community development plan formulation, field and desk appraisal and project implementation. Data were also obtained on the roles played by the local governments and the SPSUs in project facilitation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSION

Sensitization and Mobilization

Strategy for community entrance

Inputs from the various communities studied revealed that the only strategy adopted for gaining access to the communities was the identification of their traditional leaders and chiefs. In Bauchi State however, the local government officials were also used as link to the community heads and chiefs. Reports from the states showed that the team of LEEMP officials from each state identified community leaders in the various communities and paid them a courtesy visit during which they (community leaders) were intimated with the LEEMP development agenda and sought for the cooperation of the various local heads and that of the entire community. Although this method proved to be an effective gateway for

entrance into communities, better results would have been achieved if this method was combined with the identification of groups within the community. For instance, more positive achievements would have been recorded if further efforts were made to mobilize the people through their religious groups, age groups, women and farmers groups etc. as witnessed in Batum community of Adamawa State which resulted in about 60% attendance at the community engagement meeting.

Mechanism adopted for mobilization

The community members were mobilized for the sensitization meeting using community engagement meetings in the various communities. Information on invitation for the meeting was passed by the various village heads through the use of local information methods such as town criers, household heads, and interpersonal contact between members of the communities. No SPSU explored the options of strategic mounting of posters (except in Obinwanne omuaka community of Imo State) and other mass media information dissemination channels.

Attendance and Democratic process

Of all the nine communities covered by this report, only three communities (Batum, Obinwanne omuaka and Tumba from Adamawa, Imo and Bauchi States respectively) witnessed above average attendance of the community members for the sensitization meeting. Attendance reports from these communities also showed that the composition of the participants at the meeting was socially inclusive in terms of the presence and participation of individuals of different age groups, gender and the socially marginalized. For instance, the breakdown of the attendance at Obinwanne omuaka showed that 199 women were in attendance, followed by youths and adult men who were 184 and 156 in numbers respectively.

The other six communities (Dzurok, Balaifi, Sabongida, Gabchiari, Ezelu-okwe and Nguru nweafor) witnessed poor turn-out of the community for the sensitization meeting, an indication of poor mobilization. For example, only about 11% of the total community's population attended the community engagement meeting in Gabchiari community (Bauchi State) and less than 50 people attended in Balaifi community of Adamawa State.

Information Dissemination by SPSU

Information dissemination especially the intimation of community members with LEEMP

objectives was achieved through contact meetings with the community leaders and engagement meetings with the community at large. Attempts were made by the various operation officers in charge of each community to ensure that community members were sensitized using their various local dialect, and where more than one dialect is predominant, interpretations were made from the major dialect to others to ensure everybody is carried along. However, the non-availability of teaching aids like film strips, posters, fliers, video shows and pictorials which could easily enhance the understanding of the people on the past and present efforts of LEEMP was a major gap observed in the process in all the communities. Studies have shown that people especially adults; learn faster when teaching aids that involve pictorials and films strips are used for information dissemination.

Furthermore, the information disseminated adequately covered the contents of the CIM however, the CDA members in all the communities of study were not served with copies of the CIM. Also, there was no provision to obtain background and post sensitization knowledge of the community members of LEEMP objectives which could have served as an empirical basis for assessing the effectiveness of the sensitization efforts. In addition, there was no provision for the use of public address system in all the communities except in Balaifi (Adamawa). The non-utilization of the public address system was responsible for the crowded sitting arrangement observed in all the communities meetings as each participant tried to be as close as possible to the facilitators.

Election of Community Project Management Committee (CPMC)

Transparency in conducting elections

Observations from all the States showed that the elections were held in places centrally located within the various communities thereby giving all members of the various communities' equal opportunity to participate in the process. In most of the communities, primary schools or village squares were used as venue for the meeting.

The voting option adopted in all the communities of Adamawa and Bauchi States was not by show of hands as recommended by the LEEMP operation manual but by voters' queuing behind their candidates of choice. By comparative analysis, this method proved to be more effective than the show of hands as it allowed for easy counting of the voters and minimized cases of disagreement on the total number of votes as

witnessed in the three participating communities of Imo State. Use of “counting of hands method” would have posed similar challenge in the other two states and possibly disruption of the process especially in communities where high level of attendance were recorded given the dispersed sitting arrangement of people at the community meetings.

Election results in all the communities were announced immediately after the conclusion of the process.

Attendance and Democratic process

Most of the communities recorded attendance level of above 50% of the total population at the election meeting except in Gabchiari, Batum and Ezelu-okwe communities of Bauchi, Adamawa and Imo States respectively, where below average attendance was observed. In all the communities, the composition of attendance could only be said to be gender and age group balance as the attendance of the socially marginalized including the widows, landless and vulnerable was not observed.

On the requirement of inclusion of minimum of 2 women and a youth as members of the CPMC, a total compliance was observed in all the communities. For instance, the outcome of the election in Ezelu-okwe returned 4 men, 3 women and 1 youth as members of the CPMC while in Obinwane Omuaka community, 4 men, 2 women and 1 youth were elected as CPMC members. However, the nomination of candidates to vie for elective posts within the CPMC could not be said to be democratic in most of the observed communities. For instance, in Dzurok, Sabongida and Tumba communities, nomination of candidates for the election was done by the elites, CDAs, and village heads leaving out other members of the community (elitist capture). Similar experience almost occurred in Ezelu-okwe community of Imo State but for the fierce opposition of the youths who resisted the list presented by the community head and his chiefs and insisted on a participatory process.

Roles of LGA, CDA and SPSU in conducting elections

Representatives from the Local Government, Community Development Associations (where it exists), and the SPSU were present at the election meeting in all the communities to monitor and lend their support for the process except for Batum community of Adamawa State where observation revealed that the LGA was not represented at the meeting. The CDA officials in Tumba and Sabongida communities of Bauchi

States helped to resolve the conflict that evolved during the election in their communities. In Imo State, the CDA helped in mobilizing the community members. The Operation officers conducted the elections in all the communities where no CDA exists except in the three communities of Imo State where the conduct of the election process was led by the operation officers due to perceived lack of competence on the part of the CDA officials.

Training of Community Project Management Committee (CPMC)

Training content

The training content in all the communities was observed to cover all the topical issues required by LEEMP manual. However, insights from all the communities revealed that content were very shallow such that they could only be understood by someone with a fore knowledge of the training expectations. The training approach was not systematic and seemed to be a mere sensitization programme for the CPMC.

Effectiveness of delivery by the Operation Officers

Taking into cognizance the indicators of effectiveness such as duration of the training, language used, level of understanding by CPMC, availability of training materials, sequence of delivery and organization of the training processes, none of the trainings conducted in the various observed communities can be adjudged as effective. For example, the training in the various communities (with the exception of Dzurok community of Adamawa State) lasted for a maximum of four hours notwithstanding the wide range of issues expected to be delivered to the trainees and their (trainees’) low level of education.

In all the communities, CPMC members were not served with copies of training manuals and or constitution as required. The few documents served in Balaifi community (Adamawa State) during the training were written in English language which was not well understood by majority. Input from the states further showed that the operation officers in Dzurok and Balaifi communities of Adamawa State could not communicate effectively in the local language understood by majority of the community during the training. The language of communication by the OOs was however observed to be audience appropriate in other communities observed.

On the understanding of participants of the training content, the feedback obtained in the form of questions raised by CPMC members after

the training did not indicate that CPMC members adequately grasped the content of the training. This is evident from by the few and irrelevant questions that were raised after the training especially in Balaifi community, and the various shortcomings of CPMCs observed during the actual project implementation which is supposed to be the benchmark for their mastery of the training contents.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

Conduct of PRA

The use of PRA tools such as village mapping, transect walk and needs assessment and prioritization cut across all the various communities of study. However, important tool/activity such as institutional analysis which could provide useful information about local organizations and the perceptions that people have about them was not carried out in any of the community.

On the sequence of tools used, inputs from the states revealed that the conduct of the PRA exercise was not guided by any working schedule, and as a result, the process was not sequential. For instance, in all communities of Bauchi state, the group discussion came after the identification and prioritization of needs. Input from Adamawa State further showed that the conduct of PRA in Batum community was not also sequential and as a result, an early exit of most of the community members before the completion of most of the whole appraisal activities.

On the formation of the community into relatively homogenous groups for the PRA, observations showed that there was no division of the community members into working groups in Balaifi and Batum communities of Adamawa state. In the other communities, where participants were grouped, the PRA requirement of minimum of 3 groups was not met as participants were only divided into male and female groups. There was no separate group for the youths. It is important to have separate group for the youths because where youths are grouped together with the adults, their opinion may not be loud enough to be heard due to cultural norms that forbid youths from raising their voice in the domain of the elders.

Finally, qualitative methods such as In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with key informants and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were not used in most of the observed communities. Only FGD was used in Sabongida community where the only case of use of qualitative method was observed.

Community Development Plan (CDP) Formulation and Appraisal

Roles of CPMC, LGA and SPSU in preparation of CDP

Insights from the states revealed that CPMC of the various communities participated in the formulation of the CDP (except in Tumba and Gabchiari communities of Bauchi State where the formulation was carried out by the operation officers) by providing information on some of the details necessary for inclusion in the CDP. They also functioned as key decision makers in determining who to consult for help in the CDP formulation activities, in communities where external assistance was sought e.g. in Batum and Sabongida communities of Adamawa and Bauchi States respectively. In addition, the CPMC in Balaifi community mobilized the larger community for certain amendment on the initially prioritized micro-projects to forestall certain implementation problems.

The operation officers from the various SPSUs guided the community through the process of CDP formulation and also assisted to effect necessary corrections on the CDP before submission for appraisals as witnessed in Dzurok community (Adamawa). No observable role was played by the local government during the CDP formulation in all the communities.

Adherence to CDP format as specified by LEEMP

In most of the communities, the CDP was observed to be in compliance with LEEMP specification to a large extent, notwithstanding certain minor deviations in most of the communities. For instance, in Dzurok community, the design for some of the prioritized micro-project was not included in the submitted CDP.

Implementation of Micro Project Procurement

Funds for projects were disbursed directly to communities by SPSUs and each community was responsible for the procurement, transport and labour/contracting services. In Tumba and Balaifi communities of Bauchi and Adamawa States respectively, where the micro-projects was the drilling of bore holes, the services of contractor was hired to manage the micro-projects. Inputs from the States showed that the contracting procedures followed due process as advertisement for invitation of bids were posted in public places within the communities, a minimum of 3 bids were received in both communities (4 bids were received in Balaifi and 3 bids in Tumba), while interviewing and selection of

contractor was conducted by the village heads and community members.

On the other hand, the remaining communities in both states (Dzurok, Batum, Sabongida and Gabchiari) where micro-projects involved construction works hired the services of skilled labour for their projects directly. A foreman was hired in Batum and Dzurok communities of Adamawa State.

On Insurance of assets, there was no record to show that assets in the various communities were insured after completion to cover exigencies such as fire, theft or natural disaster. Also, the CPMCs in the various communities did not provide clear details on the cost expended on administration, travel and subsistence activities.

Financial Management

All the communities studied complied with the requirement to work with a current account, maintain a project cash book and petty cash book although were not properly used in some communities as found in Sabongida where all the records were kept on a loosed sheet of papers and where also cases of arbitrary withdrawal from project fund for individual “self-help” was observed. Transparency of project financial transaction was lacking in most communities (Dzurok, Balaifi, Sabongida, and Gabchiari) where project financial records were not displayed on a notice board for the assessment of the larger community. Though, the financial records were displayed in Tumba community, but at a wrong location (at CPMC Chairman’s house).

Further insights from field observations revealed that there was no auditing of financial records in all the communities either by internal or external auditor. Also, the CPMC of the various communities did not call for community meetings to present its project financial report except in Sabongida community. In addition, most of the communities did not submit report on physical and financial progress of the micro-projects to the LGRC as required.

Involvement of the larger community in project implementation

Involvement of the larger community in project implementation was generally poor. In most communities, except in Batum, only the members of CPMC were present on the project site to lend support for the project.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

What Worked?

Community entrance through local leaders:

Community entrance and project legitimization through the use of the local leaders proved to be a very effective gateway towards generating the interest of the people in the community development efforts of LEEMP. This is evident by the zero level of resistance to development intervention recorded in all the communities of study and the ease at which community members keyed into the project ideas and also rallied support for the intervention just at the approval of their leaders. It is pertinent to mention that the use of the local leaders was the major entrance strategy utilized by the various SPSUs.

Sensitization through engagement meetings:

Community engagement meeting as a means of sensitizing the community on the LEEMP objectives is no doubt the best option of ensuring that development start with the people paying careful attention to their cultural and social norms. Experiences from this study showed that the engagement meetings provided opportunity of a level playing ground for all the community members and also helped to foster cohesion and a common front for the benefiting communities. It also provided a rapid feedback on the readiness of the people to the facilitators and possible potential threats to LEEMP objectives for immediate action of the facilitators/SPSUs. For instance , a revelation of the cold war between the major ethnic groups of Dzurok community of Adamawa State (Highi and Mergi) over the case of overbearing influence of one on the other during the implementation of a past related development assistance helped to ensure that all ethnic groups were given equal representation in the project development.

CPMC steering the project: The community driven development approach of LEEMP through ceding of the steering of Project implementation to the benefiting communities (CPMC) and allowing them to identify and prioritize their needs themselves was observed to be very effective in ensuring community ownership of LEEMP assisted projects. For instance, the decision by the Balaifi community of Adamawa State to convey an independent community engagement meeting to review their earlier prioritized needs to accommodate changes due to certain emerging issues before actual implementation is an important indicator of sense of ownership of the project by the people. The composition of the CPMC to reflect gender and

age-groups balance and the central location of all the community meetings venue are also important strategies that fostered common front for the people and engendered their rapid commitment and support for the project.

Installment fund disbursement Strategy: The installment method of fund disbursement of the LEEMP is a veritable tool for maintaining check and balance of the CPMC as they expend project finance. The experience from Ezele-okwe community of Imo State where initial disbursement was ostentatiously spent on producing bill of quantities and other minor activities leading to the suspension of subsequent funds by the SPSU pending proper accountability was restored and case of diversion of project fund for personal gains in Sabongida community of Bauchi State provide a strong justification on the need why this strategy of financial control should be continued by the FPSU and SPSUs.

What Did Not Work?

The conduct of the election process by the Community Development Associations (CDAs): The LEEMP requirement that the election of CPMC be coordinated by the CDAs proved to be unrealistic in the view of difficulty of forming members into CDAs (where none exists before) coupled with proper orientation and empowerment programmes within the short time available for the OOs to coordinate such a critical assignment for newly formed CDAs.

Capacity building for the community people through the training of CPMC by the OOs: The various shortcomings observed on the part of the CPMCs of the various communities studied during CDP formulation and the actual implementation of micro-project (which are important benchmark for measuring success of training) suggest that this crucial strategy of LEEMP to build local capacity to a large extent is not been realize. For instance, in most of the communities, the bulk of the work of formulation of CDP was either done by the OOs or by hired hands due to inadequate capability on the part of the CPMC.

Mainstreaming of CDP into LGA development plan: There is no evidence from several observations that this strategy worked out as envisaged. In fact, involvement of the LGA in the LEEMP development process was observed to be poor. For instance, no observable role was played by the local government during the CDP formulation in all the communities, and in addition, the LGRC review of CDP was merely

accomplished by compulsion to fulfill necessary obligation. It must however be stated that efforts were made by the various SPSUs to involve the LGA but the poor response could be attributed to poor organization of LG governance system in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of the study show that with just little amendment, the recommended operational procedures guiding the planning and implementation of LEEMP development intervention is workable in the rural communities of Nigeria. As a matter of fact, the level of LEEMP goal attainment of achieving social inclusiveness and ensuring that projects are driven by the beneficiaries can be adjudged as above average. However, a lot is still required to ensure that the goal of building local capacity in the process of micro-project planning and implementation is enhanced, and also to improve on the level of success attained in other areas. In this vein, the followings are recommended:

- The terrain of most of the communities in rural areas is very challenging. Delay in commencement of implementation due to bad roads, for instance in Batum, suggest the need to always ensure that actual implementation of micro-projects in the state are well planned to commence and be completed during the dry season. This will eliminate the problems associated with break in project continuity such as reduced commitment of the community people. It will also guarantee better community participation as the people are likely to be less engaged in farming activities at such period.
- The processes of disbursement of fund from the FPSU to the SPSU and finally to communities for micro projects should be reconsidered to ensure uninterrupted operation and to prevent avoidable delay as witnessed in Imo and Adamawa States.
- Working with rural people, majority of whom are not well educated can be very challenging and thus requires lot of skills. In this vein, only candidates with background training as change agents (extension workers, rural sociologists or development specialists) who are willing to stay in rural communities should be considered as operation officers when there is need to recruit more hands.

REFERENCES

- Alesina, A. and La Ferrara, E. (1999). "Participation in Heterogeneous Communities". NBER Working Paper 7155. National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, Mass.
- Arcand, J. and Bassole, L. (2007) Does Community Driven Development Work? Evidence from Senegal
- Barron, P., C. Smith, and M. Woolcock (2004). *Understanding Local Level Conflict in Developing Countries: Theory, Evidence and Implications for Indonesia*, CPR Working Paper 19. World Bank.
- Brown, G., S. Cliffe, S. Guggenheim, M. Kostner, and S. Opper (2002). *A Tale of Two Projects: Community-Based Reconstruction in Timor-Leste and Rwanda*. Social Funds Unit, Innovation Update 2(4). World Bank
- Mansuri, G., and V. Rao (2004): "Community-Based and -Driven Development," World Bank Research Observer, 19(1), 1—40.
- OED (2005). "The Effectiveness of World Bank Support for Community Driven Development: An OED Evaluation."
- World Bank (2005) Draft, Community-Based Development Programs in Conflict-Affected Environments Resource Guide (2005). The World Bank
- World Bank (2006) Community-Driven Development in the Context of Conflict-Affected Countries: Challenges and Opportunities. Report No. 36425 – GLB