

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CATALYST FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

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Abstract

Participatory rural development seeks to improve the social, economic, political and capacities of the rural people. This discussion revealed that ineffectiveness of rural development initiatives in Nigeria is associated with the lack of people's participation in the identification of problems, designing and execution of the projects and programmes there from. Fifty-Four years after Nigeria's independence, most rural areas demonstrate characteristics that indicate lack of prosperity. The paper found out that the previous attempts at national development ended up dividing Nigeria into two distinct socio-economic dichotomies- the urban and the rural. The urban-biased approach to development gave rise to decades of rural neglect because government programmes for rural development never succeeded. The paper attempted to examine the factors of socio-cultural and political nature, which must be taken into account while considering the use of community participation methods in the planning, and implementation of projects. It further x-rayed the various approaches to rural development by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of each. It also discusses in detail the types of community participation and rationale for the people's participation in the matters that affect the quality of their life. The definition/delineation of the rural areas as this would help in the proper channelization and concentration of resources meant for the rural areas as well as the concerted incorporation of formal associations serving each community in local level development programmes are advocated. The paper concluded that by improving participation of community members in the development process, then development projects will succeed in rural communities and poverty will subsequently be alleviated.

Keywords: Participation, Community Participation, Rural Development, Popular Participation, Sustainable Development.