



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

AN AFRICANIST PERSPECTIVE

Edited by

Ali A. Abdullahi, Ph.D. & Emmanuel M. Ajala, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

COMMUNITY ORGANISATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Abdullateef Raji & Ibrahim O. Adeshina

Rural areas are usually characterised by poor access to infrastructure such as good roads, healthcare facilities and power supply. The gap between rural and urban areas is usually wide, especially in developing countries, which often accounts for the reason why most of these countries focus on improving the welfare of their rural dwellers and developing rural areas. Rural development, therefore, is a term used to describe a process by which the standard of living or the welfare of people in rural areas is increased through various programmes and policies. However, often, most of these programmes and policies are inadequate for the development of these areas. Therefore, the rural dwellers themselves, in conjunction with non-governmental agencies, may be required to give a helping hand in this aspect. One of the ways to do this is forming groups in rural societies in order to carry out certain programmes and projects to help develop their communities. The process of forming these groups is referred to as Community Organisation. These organisations are developed in accordance with the pressing needs of the rural people which are identified when the people come together to identify a common problem in the community and provide practical solutions for immediate execution. In this way, the community does not have to wait for the government to harness its own resources for the benefit of raising the living standards of its population.

However, sometimes, the community itself may lack the intrinsic ability to bring about change initiatives. When this happens, a change agent could come from the external environment to enlighten them on what to do, how to go about it and the resources needed to execute the development. This is where the job of a social worker becomes inevitable. The agent or social worker might, therefore, be an outsider that would encourage the people in a community to engage in community development through community organisation for their own benefits. In fact, the idea of community organisation in bringing about development of rural areas is deeply embedded in the traditional African societies where rural communities have for decades, effectively mobilised and organised themselves to embark on projects such as road construction, building market places and building community schools (Ogunleye-Adetona & Oladeinde, 2013). In this chapter, the basic issues in community organisation and rural development are

examined. First, we examine the core issues in community organisation. Second, we examine the core issues in rural development. Third, we examine the nexus between community organisation and rural development. Sociologists, social work educators and social work practitioners will find this chapter useful.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

There are different definitions of community organisation. Many years ago, Sanderson & Polson (1939) defined community organisation as a system used in obtaining an agreement in terms of the values which are of utmost importance to the collective welfare of a certain group of people and the best possible ways of attaining those values. Rengasamy (2010) sees it as a process of allowing people to locate fruitful and satisfying social cohesion as against preconceived or specific social relationships. For Batten & Michael (1990), it is a method of achieving and maintaining an effective mediation between social welfare needs and the resources needed to achieve them. Also, it entails formulating and coordinating the instruments through which the resources and talents of a group may be used as a means of achieving the collective and individual development of the said group members. Ekong (2010) has defined community organisation as a process of arranging relationships among members of a particular institution, group or community for the attainment of the group's objectives or proper functionality of the community. In simple terms, community organisation implies a process by which communities get help to identify their common goals or problems, mobilise resources as well as establish and implement policies or plans in achieving the set goals. The following are the common elements in these definitions:

- Mobilisation of resources in order to meet the needs of the community,
- Initiation of social services, and
- Coordinating the efforts of welfare agents.

TYPOLGY OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Community organisations are of different kinds and the differences have been clearly delineated. Parachini & Covington (2001) identified three types of community groups. These are direct-membership groups, issue-based coalitions and institution-based organisations.

- 1. Direct Membership Group:** This group can also be called individual membership group. This group is a relatively small and geographically-based structure designed to bring together individuals, usually lower and middle class people. The group often focuses on specific concerns such as

environmental degradation or workers' rights as well as improving the community.

2. **Issue-based Coalitions:** An issue-based coalition comprises different public interest groups and other groups that are already established. Its objectives are to bring about a change in certain public policies and also find solutions to a collective problem. Various issues affecting the community are identified by groups that are well-known in the society and brought to the people in the community for effective organisation in order to bring about positive change. It is easier for reputable groups to identify and bring people together because they are respected in the society.
3. **Institution-based Organisation:** This can also be called congregation-based or faith-based organisation. It is based on mobilising local institutions, such as non-governmental organisations, religious institutions and cooperative societies, to bring about development in the community.

OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

The following, according to Ekong (2010), are the major objectives of community organisations:

- **To benefit a sense of belonging and identity for community members:** Here, individuals identify themselves with a particular community, thereby sharing the same problem(s). There is collective consciousness where everyone is identified with others to increase social solidarity. The implication of this is that future problems of the community can be solved in better ways as individuals in the community are better equipped to increase social integration (Ekong, 2010).
- **To satisfy needs that are yet to be met:** Community organisation usually involves solving problems common to the people or meeting specific needs. Sometimes, the problem may not be obvious or glaring to the people of the community, and as such, experts will help identify these problems (Ekong, 2010).
- **To attain effective and efficient socialisation of community members:** When a new member is to be introduced to the community, socialisation is needed for that individual to become a functional member of the community. Community organisation has often been used to ascertain the identity and personality of new members of a community. This aim is usually achieved through the organisation of certain groups of people who are saddled with the responsibility of carrying out activities to make new members acquire the norms and values of the community. For instance, the age grade in different parts of Nigeria help in the integration of individuals

into the community and also perform the socialisation function in the community (Ekong, 2010).

- **To achieve social control:** Through community organisation, the control of individual behaviours can be made possible and easier. This is because community organisation involves the coming together of individuals in the community to agree on certain collective needs, thereby creating a better relationship among people. When this occurs, it will become difficult for members of the community to become deviant because of the values that they have held and they would not want to lose the bond and social attachment they have with others. This is because the bond and attachment people have with one another will ensure that they do not deviate from the social norm. Therefore, *esprit de corp* and loyalty are achieved through community organisation (Ekong, 2010).
- **To maintain the sovereignty of the Community:** Sovereignty is very essential in every nation. In order to reduce undesirable external influences in the community, members can come together to put in place certain laws or norms to prevent such from happening.
- **To appoint local representatives:** In order for a community to work together as a unit, it must be recognised through a representative who is usually the leader. This fosters effective and efficient decision making and execution of projects in the community. Community organisation allows the local people have one voice through their leaders who are usually their representatives giving them better opportunity when seeking for external help.
- **To unify interconnected community efforts:** There are some community projects and programmes that are of the same nature. Therefore, in order to prevent duplication of efforts by different units in the community, community organisation can be used to bring together all of these efforts in order to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. For instance, different religious organisations might have their own projects of the same nature that they want to embark upon (e.g. schools). But instead of each organisation building its own school, which are usually ill-equipped, their resources can be pooled together to build a single school that is well-equipped (Ekong, 2010).

APPROACHES IN COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

There are different approaches to community organisation. Some of them are discussed here:

• **Social Action Approach**

The social action of today's world is formed on the basis of conflict. It assumes the existence of a disadvantaged or aggrieved section of a particular community/society that needs to be mobilised in order to seek for equal treatment or better resource allocation from the larger community (Rothman, 2001). The main objective of social action is to make major changes in the community which could include making a case for marginal or smaller groups to participate in decision making as well as changing legislative policies, mandates and institutional practices (Smock, 2004). The goal of social action varies and depends on the situation or peculiar problem. The goals can be process goals or task goals. A task goal could be attributed to protests by a group of workers for increment in salaries while example of process goal could be the protest of students demanding for quality facilities in the school through students' representation in the management board that will bring about this change (Ekong, 1988).

Smock (2004) stated that there are two types of social-action models. They are the transformative and the power-based social actions. It is the belief of the power-based social action organisers that there is imbalance of power in the community and there is the need for them to work to build or shift power. This perceived imbalance is borne out of people oppressing others in the society and, as such, the oppressed want to change the status quo. The transformative model, on the other hand, states that there are flaws in the power system or structure of the community; hence, the need to work in order to drastically restructure it. Examples of organisations in Nigeria that use the social action model is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, the Niger Delta Avengers and the Boko Haram group. These groups usually seek for a change in the social system.

• **Civic Organising Approach**

This is a strategy that has to do with a process whereby important stakeholders are engaged in civic action and in developing goals for the community. The main objectives of this approach are i) to foster social relationships among the people of the community, ii) develop pleasant relationships among heterogeneous groups and iii) build upon the strength of the individuals in the community in order to solve problems that are common to them as a group (Rothman, 2001). Civic organisations endorse bonding social relationships built upon instrumental ties (relatively homogeneous and small group of residents) and affective ties (sense of togetherness and collective action). The main motivating factor in civic organisations is self-interest. But in the course of working together on issues or

solving problems that concern the group, interpersonal relationships are built and social cohesion is achieved (Smock, 2004). Vigilante groups in Nigerian communities are examples of the use of this approach because people come together in order to solve a problem.

- **Social Planning Approach**

This is an approach of community organisation that focuses on the expert knowledge of professionals in relation to fundamental social problems that require technical strategies. The objective of the approach is inherent in the design of a formal policy and plan of actions by experts in order to deliver problem solving strategies and services to those who need them. The community according to this approach, has numerous problems requiring the knowledge of expert planners in ameliorating them. The focus is not on the self-interest of the community but on the agencies that participate and the community as a whole (Rothman, 2001). Examples can be found in the agricultural extension agents who deliver from time to time new strategies for adoption by farmers and other rural people, immunization exercises by health workers for community members and clean-up campaigns by sanitary inspectors.

- **Community Building Approach**

This model encompasses the elements of both the social planning model and locality development. The approach focuses on reinforcing the economic and social institutions of the community in such a way that it links them to resources in the outside world. The community building approach has the objective of harnessing the internal skills and technical know-how of the community by focusing on their assets and employing certain stakeholders in the community to come up with technically sound, high-quality and comprehensive plans. Community building encourages the connection of various institutions and agencies based on shared interests and common views about the betterment of the community (Smock, 2004). Therefore, the main focus is the identification of those agencies that have common interests in developing the community and also have a stake in that community.

- **Women-Centred Approach**

This approach defies the separation of women's private lives and families. The approach incorporates the assumptions of both the civic organising and social action approach. The elements of the locality approach that the women-centred approach encompasses include respect, inclusiveness, skill development, caring and nurturance democratic processes and utilisation. Aspects of the social action approach includes a crave for fundamental political and cultural change in the patriarchal system through family-friendly programmes. The aim of this approach is to establish a balanced relationship between males and females in the

community by encouraging democratic processes and relationships built upon roles and division of labour, instead of the self-interest of individuals (Eichler, 2007). Bonds are fostered between a small unit of women in the community and institutions that are external to the communities.

THE CONCEPT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The term "rural development" has been defined in different ways. For example, rural development is defined by Iwuagwu (2006) as a process of enhancing the quality of life of rural dwellers in terms of providing their basic needs like infrastructural facilities. It is further defined by Raheem & Bako (2014) as a multi-faceted process in which welfare and income, productivity, education, transportation, health, employment, nutrition as well as other characteristics of healthier living conditions of rural people can be transformed or improved upon. Ogunnowo (1997) defined rural development as a procedure that entails the mobilisation and harmonisation of the resources (both human and material) of all rural dwellers in order to achieve improvement in their status economically and socially through quantitative and qualitative changes. Thus, rural development is a change planned to increase the standard of living of the rural populace and integrating them into the world of development.

Furthermore, rural development, according to Obasi & Oguche (1995), is the creation and expansion of opportunities to enable individuals in rural areas in order to reach their full potentials via education and take part in the decisions on matters that concern them. It is an effort to increase the output of rural areas by creating employment opportunities, thereby eradicating extreme poverty, ignorance and diseases. Otigba (2013) defines rural development as a technique which is aimed at improving the social life and socio-economic characteristics of the people in rural areas. It entails a process of deliberate change in which approaches are adopted for the transformation or improvement in the total lifestyle of rural people.

With all the preceding definitions of rural development, it can be deduced that the major aim of rural development is to improve the standard of living of the rural dwellers using different approaches and strategies.

THE STATUS OF THE RURAL AREAS IN NIGERIA

There have been various strategies and policies by successive governments in Nigeria to enhance the living standards of rural communities in the country. However, the realisation of this objective has remained elusive. This notion is

buttressed by the obvious absence of basic infrastructural facilities and (the presence of) low living standards among the rural people. There is a glaring poverty in the rural areas of the country. As about 70% of the people in Nigeria are rural community dwellers and live below the poverty line (Raji *et. al.* 2017). There is usually low access to many rural areas in the country because of the terrible condition of the roads that lead to these areas (Olayiwola & Adeleye, 2005). Potable water supply in many rural areas in Nigeria is absent and the spread of diseases is worsened by the poorly sanitised environment in the areas. Education in rural areas has been very poor as there are inadequate facilities to foster the literacy level of rural communities. Also, there is a lack of qualified and trained teachers to carry out the teaching and training of rural children (Ele, 2006).

A major consequence of the underdeveloped nature of rural areas is rural-urban migration, which is being experienced in most rural areas in Nigeria as the productive youths leave their various rural communities in search of greener pastures. This may be dysfunctional to both rural and urban areas as the urban areas become congested resulting in the overstretching of facilities. As a result, rural areas suffer the lack of a productive age grade to develop (Nwankwo & Apeh, 2006). Therefore, the main focus of rural development programmes is to improve the general welfare of rural people. However, other specific objectives according to Ijere (1992) are to:

- Achieve greater allocation of resources through the budget to rural areas in order for them not to be cheated and sidelined;
- Improve rural infrastructures such as water, market stalls, roads, electricity and storage facilities;
- Create employment opportunities for the citizens of rural communities;
- Maintain social and political stability;
- Promote skill development at the local level and emphasise on the harmonisation of resource use;
- Improve food supply as well as increasing the incomes of farmers in the rural areas. And
- Promote the participation of rural people in identifying their needs and priorities and in planning and implementing programmes.

APPROACHES TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Just like community organisation, rural development has some important approaches. Three main approaches to rural development have been identified

by Ekong (2010) in Nigeria. They are: Community development, extension and integrated rural development approaches.

- **Community Development Approach**

This approach aims at initiating a large number of strategies that would encourage self-help initiatives, self-improvement and self-reliance where the rural dwellers themselves harness resources on their own in order to develop. It works through the framework of cooperative effort and self-help initiatives among the people of the rural community, with technical support from the government or external bodies. It lays emphasis on the group's actions and the collective efforts of individuals in the community. This implies that the group's welfare is of more importance than that of the individual (Anaeto, 2003). Through mobilising of people, efforts in community development are directed towards the transformation of social, political, economic and cultural institutions. With the aim of enlightening the rural people, attempts are made to eliminate the lack of self-confidence, dependency on government and pessimism. In community development, interventions from the government and external agencies should be in response to the identified needs of the community, instead of a top-down approach where the people are not consulted before projects are executed for them.

- **Extension Approach**

This approach basically deals with educating the rural community on improving their standard of living. It is one of the oldest approaches in community development. The approach is based on the premise of extending the benefits of new ideas, facts and knowledge to people in rural communities. Extension is defined by Maunder (1972) as a process of creating, applying and transmitting ideas aimed at bringing about behavioural change in people and helping them live a better life via learning contemporary methods of making their institutions, vocations and enterprise better. Williams (1981) identified three basic tasks extension seeks to accomplish: i) disseminating information that is useful and relevant to the people; ii) application of the information disseminated to solve practical problems and iii) assisting the people in using the information to help themselves.

While the main focus of extension is on agricultural development, which is a main source of livelihood for rural dwellers, it is also indirectly concerned with some other challenges in rural areas such as nutrition, health and cooperating with other agencies responsible for facilitating and promoting the services that are not limited to agriculture. The National Teachers' Institute (2003) reiterated that extension agents should not compel innovation on their audience. Rather, they

should try as much as possible to interact and work on those who felt the needs required by the people.

- **Integrated Rural Development Approach**

This approach appears to be the most favoured for rural developmental efforts in Nigeria. This is because it is based on the assumption that not only education and technology can help develop rural areas but also a blend of numerous factors such as attractive markets, physical inputs and delivery of facilities. The approach is regarded as multipurpose because programmes on health, agriculture, electricity, education and rural cooperatives are usually carried out together rather than treating them in isolation. It is an integrated approach because all the components are imperative and valued for the role they play collectively and separately. The main objective of the integrated rural development approach is to mobilise material and human resources (in order) to create a strong economy for the nation as a whole where the benefits derived are shared among both the rural and urban populace. It encourages the participation of the affected people and also establishes efficient and effective institutions driven by administrative services that disseminate adequate information at all levels (Fellin, 2001).

KEY ISSUES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

According to Ekong (1988), there are four key issues in community development. They are the concept of initiative, self-help, felt need and citizen participation.

- **Initiative**

This concept is based on the notion that before any meaningful development can take place, the first step must be taken by the community itself. It assumes that the community in its original state lacks the initiative to develop. It is believed that the absence of the initiative to develop is one of the characteristics inherent in developing countries, particularly their rural communities. This absence of initiative can be attributed to the continuous physical and mental starvation, along with the lack of self-confidence that follows this deprivation, leading to a feeling of helplessness. There are certain factors that hinder people in rural communities to take effective actions that can drive social and economic progress. These factors include rigid cultural and social patterns, acceptance of the present condition, ancient customs, fear of the unknown and superstitions. While this initiative may be applicable to many rural societies, it may not be applicable to others because ignorance and low standard of living (poverty) may be the cause of lack of initiative in some societies. In the case of Nigeria, there has been some development based on self-initiative, where communities pooled their resources together to achieve a common goal. For instance, community schools and roads are built through the various community development associations.

- **Felt Needs**

The concept of felt needs refers to the immediate needs (or present condition) of the community that are important and call for urgent attention. It has been established by scholars that felt needs are different from real needs. Rural people may pay more attention to their felt needs (which may be unrealistic and irrelevant) rather than their real needs in most cases. There are four different views on community needs (Ekong, 2010). The first view is the agent's goals of achieving community development. The second view is the goals of the community itself. The third view is the community's understanding of what is appropriate to the agent's goal while the fourth is the community's view on how to realise their own objectives. It is very important to identify local needs and merge them with national goals if there is to be meaningful national economic and social development (Akpomovie, 2010).

- **Self-help**

This is related to the concept of initiative, as earlier discussed. The idea of self-help originated from the fact that government alone cannot take care of the people's welfare and, as such, local people themselves should develop strategies and take steps themselves to complement the development efforts of the government. Therefore, it is believed that communities should not rely on government only; rather, they should focus on how they can improve their own well-being through harnessing the various human and capital resources that they possess. Self-help programmes have been embarked upon by many communities in Nigeria, with community schools, pipe-borne water, town halls and dispensaries as examples of self-help projects in many Nigerian villages. Sometimes, the self-help goes beyond only carrying out developmental projects; they may involve complimenting government efforts. For instance, a community may decide to set up a committee to raise funds from time to time to maintain certain facilities provided by the government (such as electricity, schools and healthcare facilities). However, one of the shortcomings of this concept of self-help includes the fact that government tends to neglect its own responsibility of developing communities where the self-help initiative is used (Udoeye, 1992).

- **Citizen Participation**

Participation is defined as engaging in activities leading to community development. These include attending public meetings, belonging to committees and groups in the community, having knowledge of local issues and contributing financially to the development of the community. Participation is important because it has to do with tapping into underutilised human resources, since people are mobilised and convinced to understand and cooperate in developmental efforts. Participation also acts as a remedy for the feeling of

alienation among those in the community, creating a sense of belongingness among them. Moreover, through participation, relevant information on the people's felt needs is generated (Putnam, 2000).

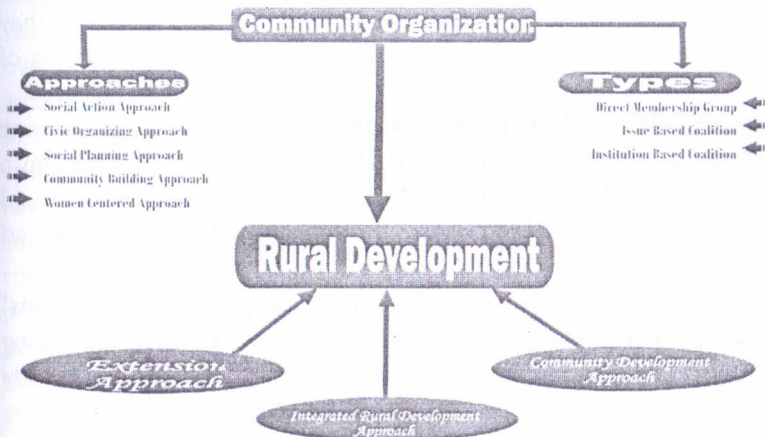
COMMUNITY ORGANISATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE NEXUS

Community organisations in rural areas strive for the optimality in harnessing the resources (human and material) of the community in order to improve the welfare of the people, with or without external help. They do this by connecting people and ensuring that they work together to achieve the common goal. Thus, the enhancement of the welfare of the rural people is the ultimate goal of community organisations. The point of convergence between community organisation and rural development is the fact that these community organisations are geared towards achieving rural development. Rural development, through the community's efforts of organisations has become a familiar characteristic of the present Nigerian society. There are many community organisations in the country that seek to provide amenities such as roads, schools, religious institutions, healthcare services and community protection (e.g. Vigilantism) (United Nations Development Programme, 2000). It is not sufficient anymore to give a range of options or alternatives to rural communities through the "top-down" approach in order to develop. Rather, in addition to this opportunity, rural people try to initiate and implement projects they perceive to be of top priority to them.

With community development efforts, rural people can feel like they are involved in the development of the nation; they can as well improve significantly in terms of their economic and social status. The need to ensure congruence in respect of the objectives of community organisations and those of governments at all levels is very important, because through contact, action and participation, rural communities can make progress in organisational ability, leadership skills and commitment to their cause. There is no doubt therefore that community organisations can drive rural development because the need of the people is best known to them and they are the only groups which can formulate the best way to solve their problems. Although, they may need help from the outside world, they are in the best position to effectively diagnose and state their problems as well as understand the different resources individuals in the community possess to help solve them.

As Figure 1 shows, community organisation is one of the many tools that are used for the development of rural areas. The figure shows that rural

development has its different approaches which include the extension approach, the integrated rural development approach and the community development approach. However, all these approaches are introduced by the government through its many agencies, often without the consent of the rural dwellers. This is why the community organisation's approach to rural development came up to integrate rural people in order to ensure that their felt needs are attended to and they can be a part of their own development.



Source: Authors' conception (2018)

Figure 1: Relationship between community organisations and community development.

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

There are many challenges facing the stakeholders in charge of rural development in Nigeria. Some of the obstacles are discussed.

- **Rural-urban migration:** The high rate of movement of the rural workforce to urban areas in the country has continuously contributed to the underdevelopment of rural areas. This is because the children and the aged, who are not in their productive stages are mostly left to perform the economic functions (especially agriculture) which contribute to the level of poverty in the areas. When the young and active ones leave the community for urban areas, the community loses its workforce and, as such, development indices such as industrialisation may be impossible to achieve.
- **Lack of consultation with the rural dwellers before executing projects:** More often than not, projects in rural areas are carried out

without the full involvement or participation of the rural people themselves. This means that plans and programmes are created by technocrats residing in urban areas who usually assume they know the needs of the people in rural communities (Idowu, 1999).

- **Funds misappropriation:** Corruption is not a new phenomenon in Nigerian. There are strong indications and evidence that funds allocated for the execution of certain projects are siphoned to cater for the personal interests of officials in charge of such programmes. Most times, the funds meant for development programmes are not released at all; even when they are released, they may come late and this hinders the implementation of such programmes.
- **Ineffective and inefficient implementation of rural development programmes:** Implementation of effective and efficient policies in a developing nation like Nigeria is commonly difficult. The relevant rural development agencies in Nigeria have, over time, ineffectively implemented programmes of rural development.
- **Inability of successive governments to carry on past administrations' developmental projects:** Usually, successive governments in developing countries do not feel the need to continue a particular project already started by the previous government because they want to impress the people and win them over. This has contributed to the overall underdevelopment of rural areas in Nigeria. For instance, the Better Life Programme for Rural Women initiated by the Babangida government was replaced by the Family Support Programme of the General Sanni Abacha regime and these programmes were never effectively implemented before being abolished or replaced.
- **Lack of manpower:** There is inadequate and insufficient manpower to carry out the task of rural development. This is because the majority of the experts usually opt for the private sectors where they can work in the cities and have higher pay. Misuse of staff and inadequate staff training, coupled with lack of dedication, negative attitudes and the incompetence of the personnel themselves may contribute to this problem.
- **Negative attitudes of the people to developmental programmes:** Culture is the major problem in this aspect, because the beliefs of some people may hinder them from accepting certain changes brought to them for their own development. Thus, when development agents fail to realise the needs of the people and understand their culture, it disrupts the free flow and positive effects of the development programme.

CONCLUSION

The chapter examines the relationship between community organisations and rural development. It introduces the concepts of community organisation and rural development. The objectives of the concepts, their advantages as well as their flaws are discussed. Also, types and approaches of community organisation and rural development are discussed. The two concepts were established to be interrelated and complementary. It is established that community organisations bring about rural development. Bringing people together, helping the community realise both its strength and weaknesses, helping rural people develop on their own with or without any external forces or outsider, increasing the social bond among individuals and groups are prerequisites to rural development, especially in a developing country like Nigeria. However, community organisations do come with a cost. Government may use it as an excuse to neglect their own responsibility of providing for the welfare of the rural people. Nevertheless, several studies have showed that community organisations are important tools in rural development in developing countries. There have been various programmes of rural development in Nigeria, but the majority of these programmes, if not all, have met with many obstacles and hindrances. Thus, there is the need for practical solutions to these obstacles and challenges. The following are suggested solutions to rural underdevelopment:

- Agencies of rural development such as rural extension, agencies and cooperatives, among others should be improved upon in terms of adequacy of staff, staff training and better working tools and environments in order to make them more attractive to the rural people. This will ensure reduced rural-urban migration in the country and lead to the development of rural communities.
- Data should be gathered from time to time to evaluate projects on rural development in order to assess the progress made. Present and past programmes should be compared in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, in order to improve on the current ones.
- It has been established that those who plan development usually fail to involve the beneficiaries of the plans and also fail to consider the people's felt needs. Therefore, rural development policies and programmes should be developed to meet the felt needs of the people and also ensure the participation of the rural people in decisions made on their welfare.
- In the event of a change in government, the incoming government should endeavour to communicate with the outgoing government on the developmental programmes they carried out in order to ensure continuity.

Even if there will be a change in any of them, it should not be a radical one that will add to the existing problem.

- Proper supervision of projects and programmes as well as checks and balances should be ensured in order to guard against corrupt practices such as delay or embezzlement of funds meant for development by change agents or officials.
- The government and change agencies should educate and socialise the people on the need to change their negative attitudes towards developmental projects. Local people should be sensitised to the danger in holding on to bad cultural practices that are inimical to growth and development in rural areas.
- Both the government and beneficiaries of rural development projects should develop or improve their maintenance culture in respect of the projects.

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