



Interrogating Community Self-Help Development Initiatives in Ikpoba Okha and Oredo Local Government Areas, Edo State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This paper interrogates community self-help development initiative to ascertain the complementary roles the local governments in line with their constitutional mandates can play in strengthening local efforts in addressing felt needs. To achieve this, it raised some research questions and adopted the survey research design. Using a multistage sampling, it elicited responses through questionnaires and in-depth interviews on the phenomenon being investigated from residents of Amagba community in Oredo and Idogbo community in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas in Edo State. Data were analysed using the simple percentages and thematisation. Findings reveal that although community self-help initiatives such as the provision of security, electricity, pipe-borne water, community layouts mapping, roads and drainages promote development, these initiatives mostly lack Local Government support thereby leading to unintended consequences like flooding, erosion and urban slums. To be assured of quality and sustainable delivery of community self-help development initiatives, it recommends that the Local Governments need to strengthen its funding, technical and supervisory capacities as well as set up a special department for the coordination of community self-help initiatives so as to reposition the Local Governments as effective enablers of community developmental efforts.

Keywords: Community, Self-help initiatives, Local government, Development

1. Introduction

Development is unequivocally an on-going process where perhaps no individual, community and society in the world, no matter how advanced, would not

have need of (Akpomuvie, 2010). It is a well-known fact that development initiatives are derived from several sources – the individual, the community, socio-cultural organizations, institutions, governments either acting independently or in concert with each other. As regard community development, Ako and Ojo (2019) opined that the level of community development is determined by the level of involvement of the immediate citizenry who come together to achieve common goals. The opinion is hinged on the fact that a development programme even with the best of intention will not be meaningful and sustainable if it is not initiated and carried out by members of the community since they are in the best position to identify what they truly need and maybe ready and willing to combine their efforts in meeting those needs (Bappi, Singh & Dahiru, 2018).

In view of the foregoing, community self-help initiative has become one of the dominant approaches to sustainable grassroots development. Aweto (2000) argued that the idea of self-help is one of the several distinguishing features of community development theory, practice and ideology. Self-help is based on the premise that people can, will, and should collaborate to solve community problems. In addition to the practical problem-solving utility of this perspective, self-help builds a stronger sense of community and a foundation for future collaboration (Wordu & Azunwo, 2017). According to Onyeozu (2007), the permanent cure to a community's problem is achieved only when members of the community have learned to apply or administer remedy to problems themselves. The idea of community self-help initiative is also deeply rooted in the rich traditions of most cultures around the world in which evidences abound of how

communities have, for generations successfully organized themselves to construct roads, build bridges, palaces, market stall, dwelling houses among many others.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The development gaps evident in most communities in Nigeria suggest that without adequate external support, the community themselves may not be able to undertake key development projects; and in most cases when they do, the projects may lack the desired quality. This reality has reinforced the opinion being held by some citizens that it is the sole responsibility of government, especially the Local Government, to provide the basic needs of communities. This opinion is backed by the thinking that the Local Government has the requisite funds and technical expertise at its disposal (Imuetinyan and Mustapha, 2017). In other words, the Local Government should develop the community by providing the necessary infrastructure and social and physical amenities needed (Ogunleye-Adetona & Oladeinde, 2013). Unfortunately, the efforts of the Local Government towards development over the years have either been inadequate or absent in most communities. Consequently, several communities in Nigeria are experiencing major developmental challenges such as insecurity, inadequate water supply, inaccessible road networks and so on.

Equally, literature is replete with the challenges that have hindered the Local Government in Nigeria from actualizing the mandates for their establishment (Imuetinyan and Mustapha, 2017) including the provision of services for which they are intended to be the most successful provider in view of their closeness to the people compared to other levels of government (Bello-Imam, 2007). It is likely that a major setback to actualizing the mandates is that the Local Governments in Nigeria have not fully and properly integrated community self-help development initiatives into their development programmes on a continuing basis.

1.2 Objectives

The paper seeks to:

- ascertain the community self-help initiatives that promote development in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Edo State;
- identify the challenges of community self-help development initiatives in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha LGAs; and

- examine the prospects of Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Governments' involvements in community self-help development initiatives in the areas.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were coined to guide the trajectory of the paper:

- What are the community self-help initiatives that promote development in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas?
- What are the challenges of community self-help development initiatives in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas?
- Will the involvement of Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government in community self-help initiatives promote quality and sustainable development in the areas?

2. Conceptual Clarification:

2.1 Community Self-Help Initiatives

Community self-help initiatives include all collective development strategies and interventions at the community level (Akpomuvie, 2010). These interventions are enabled by specific features such as social ties, common perspectives, closeness of residents and the ease to engage in joint action that prevail at the community (Anyanwu, 2009). As an approach, it is inextricably linked to the broader concept of community development which consist of three major strands – the extension approach, the project approach and the service approach. The service approach to community development is known as “self-help” (Idode, 1989).

According to Udoye (1992), self-help initiative/development is both an object (what) and a process (how). As an object, it should be an induced change for the achievement of community improvement, while as a process it should be a well-articulated programme and effort to assist individuals to acquire attitudes, skills and concepts required for their democratic participation in the effective solution to a wide range of community problems in order of priority determined by their increasing level of competence. In other words, the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of the governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the communities, to integrate these communities in the life of the nation and enable them to contribute fully to national progress.

According to Abatena (1995), community self-help programs tend to foster sustained community support in two ways. Firstly, such programs provide the people with an opportunity to manage and monitor the program in such a fashion that it continues to serve their interest and as a result attracts steady community support. Secondly, such experience would help the development of community capability to manage its own affairs and deal with its problems more effectively on a sustained basis.

2.2 Development

Development is a very broad which cut across values such as capacity building, equity, sustainability, self-reliance and empowerment. it includes the improvement of people lives in terms of economic, social, political, environmental, spiritual/personal and cultural aspects. According to Coetzee (2001), development connotes a favorable change in status such as moving from worse to better; simple to complex; advancing away from the inferior; a form of social change that leads to progress and the process of enlarging people's choices of acquiring knowledge, and having access to resources for a decent standard of living.

Edoun & Jahed (2009) posit that development is related to modernization, which include the attainment of services, including clean and safe water, health, education, good roads, and the level of citizen interest in basic leadership at local level. It goes beyond economic growth and material changes and incorporates human attitude with respect to a spirit of enhanced human capacity development, and mass citizen participation in the decision-making process.

Whereas traditional development strategies have relied on national frameworks and on the abilities of central government authorities, the success of development at the local level depends, to a large degree, on the subsistence of suitable local institutional frameworks and on the accessibility of the essential systems and skill levels at all government levels. Without a functional decentralized local authority, development at the grassroots is not achievable (Olsen, 2007; Imuetinyan and Mustapha, 2017). Along these lines, the focus of development is generally concerned with ensuring that the social well-being of individuals is paramount and should be reflected in the life of the individual rather than quantitative economic growth or the state of the economy.

2.3 Local Government

The concept of local government has been defined in different ways by several scholars. Nevertheless, in all the viewpoints, there seems to be a form of

commonality which largely derives from the fact that we cannot realize the full benefit of democratic government unless we begin by the admission that all problems in their incidence require decision at the place, and by the persons by whom the incidence is most deeply felt (Laski, 1964).

Fatile, Fajonyomi and Adejuwon (2017) opined that the concept of Local Government is widely conceived as administration at the local level. The United Nations Office for Public Administration (Ola and Tonwe, 2005) sees Local Government as a political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs including the power to impose taxes or to exact labour for prescribed purposes. The Local Government is instituted to maintain law and order, provide a limited range of social amenities and encourage co-operation and participation of inhabitants towards the improvement of their living conditions (Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2014).

According to Otohile & Edigin (2011), Local Government also connotes the decentralization or dispersion of authoritative decision making whereby the authority to make decision is displaced downwards from remote points near to top administration or outward from geographical locations, thus bringing authority closer to the people affected by it. Similarly, Ikelegbe (2005) views local government as a segment of a constituent state or region of a nation state established by law to provide public service and regulate public affairs within its area of jurisdiction. By implication, as the closest level of government to the people, the Local Government has the power and mandate to deliver on assigned fundamental objectives of government within its sphere of influence (Imuetinyan and Mustapha, 2017).

3. The Study Area

Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas are part of the eighteen (18) Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Edo State. The Local Government Areas are also two of the three metropolitan Local Government Areas that make up Benin City, the Edo State capital. Despite being situated within the metropolis with some considerable level of State Government infrastructural interventions, there are still sub-urban communities in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha (LGAs) which lack the desired Local Government presence in terms of infrastructural developments. Some of these communities which also form the study area include Amagba in Oredo,

and Idogbo in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas respectively.

3.1 Development Mandates and Challenges of Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas

As obtainable in other climes, the Local Government in Nigeria, and by extension in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha, is intended to be the bedrock of development; a place where people first seek succor for better living and where good socio-economic and welfare services can be easily rendered (Chinda, 2014). The fourth schedule of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, clearly spells out the mandates of the Local Government in Nigeria to include:

The consideration and the making of recommendations to a State Commission on Economic Planning or any similar body on:

- the economic development of the State, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the Council of the State are affected;
- proposal made by the said Commission;
- Collection of rates, radio and television licenses;
- Establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm;
- Licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically-propelled trucks), canoes, wheel barrows and carts;
- Establishment, maintenance and regulation of slaughter houses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks and public conveniences;
- Construction and maintenance of roads, streets, streets lightings, drains and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the House of Assembly of a State;
- Naming of roads and streets, and numbering of houses;
- Provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal;
- registration of all birth, death and marriages;
- assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of a State;
- Control and regulation of:
 - Movement and keeping of pets of all descriptions
 - Out-door advertising and hoarding
 - Shops, kiosks and restaurants
 - Bakeries and other places for the sale of food to the public

- Laundries
- Licensing for the sale of liquor.

Although the constitution clearly mandates Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Governments to discharge a wide range of functions, the reality is that their presence is rarely felt as they are bedeviled by a lot of challenges. These challenges range from State Government domineering tendencies and the usurpation of local government authority (Kalagbor, 2001), inadequate funding, diversion and misappropriation of funds, lack of visionary leadership and dearth of skilled technical and professional staff to carry out their duties (Chinda, 2014). These constraining issues have led to the continued drive to seek ways to beat developmental odds at the grassroots and to make Local Government more responsive and result oriented.

4. Theoretical Perspective

The paper adopts the participatory development theory/approach. The approach is critical of the modernization paradigm that heavily promotes a top-down ethnocentric and paternalistic view of development which assumes the knowledge of governments and agencies were correct, and that indigenous populations were either ignorant or had incorrect beliefs (Cypher & Diethz, 1997; Weyman & Fussell, 1996). Consequently, the Participatory, or “People Centered Development” approach which focuses on ‘bottom up’ planning, ‘People-Centered Development’ and the view that ordinary people have the capacity to manage their own development was espoused in its place (Conyers & Hills, 1990; Chambers, 1992; Rahman, 1993; & Dinbabo, 2003). Specifically, the participatory development theory encourages the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of development. It emphasizes that experts’ participation alone in the development process cannot guarantee significant progress in any development initiative. Thus, it advocates the integration of local communities in development endeavours (Rahim, 1994). It further asserts that the lack of sensitivity to integrating local inputs accounted for the lack of development and/or failures of development projects at the local level (Coetzee, 2001). The significance of the theory is its charge to individuals and societies to recognize and become subjects of their own creation instead of being artifacts of technical processes involved in development (Ako, 2017).

The critical standpoint of the participatory development theory therefore, is the fostering of active involvement of people in making decision about implementation of processes, programs and

projects, which affect them (Slocum, Wichhart, Rocheleau, & Thomas-Slayter, 1995). In all, the participatory development theory/approach reinforces the following advantages:

Sustainability and Self-Reliance: It leads to increased self-reliance among the community and to the establishment of a network of self-sustaining groups. This also in turn has implication for greater efficiency of development services and opportunities for the community to contribute constructively to the development processes.

Building of Democratic Organizations: The settings and size of a community in a particular location is ideal for the diffusion of collective decision-making and leadership skills, which can be used in the subsequent development of inter-group federations.

Higher Productivity: Given access to resources, the community shares fully in the benefits of their efforts. They also become more receptive to new technologies, services, and achieve higher levels of production. This helps to build net cash surpluses that strengthen the group’s economic base and contribute to the community capital formation.

Reduced Costs and Increased Efficiency: The contributions of the community in terms of knowledge of local conditions, labour, locally available materials and finance to projects reduce costs. The community also facilitates the diagnosis of environmental, social and institutional constraints, as well as the search for solutions for local problems (Dinbabo, 2003).

In the context of community self-help development initiatives in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas, the theory is apt as it offers a veritable perspective to analyse community efforts in bridging developmental gaps.

5. Methodology

The study adopts the survey research design. Thus, responses were elicited through questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Using a multistage sampling, two communities, one each from the two Local Government Areas and a total of two hundred (200) respondents; one hundred (100) per community, were first purposively sampled. The communities include Amagba in Oredo Local Government Area and Idogbo in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area. Both communities were purposively selected based on their sub-urban status and prevalence of self-help development initiatives.

The respondents were further stratified into community leaders and landlords. The community leaders were made up of members of the traditional institutions and/or the community development associations. Administration of Questionnaires and conduct of in-depth interviews were then undertaken through a simple random sampling. In all, fifteen questions, formatted on a three-point Likert type of scale were used to elicit responses. The questionnaire has response options of “Agreed” (A) 3points, “Undecided” (UD) 2points and “Disagreed” (D) 1point. Out of the two hundred (200) questionnaires administered, only a total of one hundred and eighty-three (183); eighty-nine (89) from Ikpoba Okha and ninety-four (94) from Oredo, were properly filled and retrieved. While the simple percentage was used to analyse the quantitative data, thematisation was deployed in the analysis of in-depth interviews.

Community Self-Help Initiatives Promoting Development in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha LGAs

The table below presents the result from the response on the community self-help initiatives promoting development in the sampled communities of Idogbo in Ikpoba Okha and Amagba in Oredo LGAs respectively:

Table 1: Community Self-Help Initiatives Promoting Development in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha LGAs

S/N	Item	Responses								
		Idogbo (89 Respondents)			Amagba (94 Respondents)			Aggregate (183 Respondents)		
		A	UD	D	A	UD	D	A	UD	D
1	Inclusion of residents in community self-help initiatives promotes development in the area	73 (82)	11 (12)	5 (6)	79 (84)	12 (13)	3 (3)	152 (83)	23 (13)	8 (4)
2	Vigilante activities contribute to the promotion of development in the community	89 (100)	- -	- -	91 (97)	3 (3)	- -	180 (98)	3 (2)	- -
3	Sinking of Individual and community bore-holes contributes to the well-being of the community	77 (86)	5 (6)	7 (8)	79 (84)	7 (7)	8 (9)	156 (85)	12 (7)	15 (8)
4	Community layouts mapping, construction of roads and drainages promote development in the area	88 (99)	1 (1)	- -	91 (97)	3 (3)	- -	179 (98)	4 (2)	- -
5	Provision of power (electricity) infrastructure promotes development in the community	87 (98)	2 (2)	- -	94 (100)	- -	- -	181 (99)	2 (1)	- -

Field Survey (2021)

The first item in the table above shows that 152 respondents representing 83 percent agreed that the inclusion of residents in community self-help initiatives promotes development in the area. On the contrary, only 8 respondents representing 4 percent express disagreement while 23 representing 13 percent were neutral. The second item reveals that 180 respondents representing 98 percent affirmed that vigilante activities contribute to the promotion of development in the community while 3 respondents representing 2 percent were undecided. On the third item, while 156 respondents representing 85 percent were in consonance that sinking of individual and community bore-holes contributes to the well-being of the community, 15 respondents, indicative of 8 percent disagreed and 12 respondents representing 7 percent took a neutral stance. Item four shows that 98 percent of respondents agreed that community layouts mapping, construction of roads and drainages promote development in the area while 2 percent were of neutral opinion. Lastly on item five, 99 percent of respondents agreed that provision of power (electricity) infrastructure promotes development in the community while only 1 percent were undecided.

Challenges of Community Self-Help Development Initiatives in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha LGAs.

On the specific challenges hindering community self-help development initiatives, the table below presents result from the feedbacks expressed by respondents in the sampled communities:

Table 2: Challenges of Community Self-Help Development Initiatives in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha LGAs.

S/N	Item	Responses								
		Idogbo (89 Respondents)			Amagba (94 Respondents)			Aggregate (183 Respondents)		
		A	UD	D	A	UD	D	A	UD	D
1	Community self-help security initiatives lack Local Government support in the area	87 (98)	2 (2)	- -	91 (97)	3 (3)	- -	178 (97)	5 (3)	- -
2	Lack of technical support from the Local Government contributes to poor execution of community layouts mapping, construction of roads and drainages in the area	77 (87)	7 (8)	4 (5)	89 (95)	2 (2)	3 (3)	166 (91)	9 (5)	7 (4)
3	Inadequate funding impedes community effort to provide electricity infrastructure like transformer in the area	69 (78)	11 (12)	9 (10)	72 (77)	20 (21)	2 (2)	141 (77)	31 (17)	11 (6)
4	Lack of Local Government support in the community impacts negatively on access to pipe-borne water	16 (18)	22 (25)	51 (57)	15 (16)	12 (13)	67 (71)	31 (17)	34 (19)	118 (64)
5	There is a general absence of Local Government support in the affairs of the community	81 (91)	5 (6)	3 (3)	94 (100)	- -	- -	175 (95)	5 (3)	3 (2)

Field Survey (2021)

In the table two above, item one shows that 178 respondents representing 97 percent agreed that community self-help security initiatives lack local government support in the area while 5 respondents representing 3 percent were undecided. On item two, 166 respondents representing 91 percent agreed that the lack of technical support from the Local Government contributes to poor execution of community layouts mapping, construction of roads and drainages in the area, 4 percent disagreed while 5 percent were undecided. Item three reveals that 77 percent of respondents agreed that inadequate funding impedes community effort to provide electricity infrastructure like transformer in the area while only 6 percent and 17 percent disagreed and were nonaligned respectively. However, item four shows that 17 percent of respondents agreed that lack of local government support in the community impacts negatively on access to pipe-borne water, 19 percent were undecided while 64 percent of them disagreed. The percentage of respondent who disagreed is indicative of the fact that owners of properties in the sampled communities have completely taken up the responsibility to provide water for their households through the sinking of boreholes within their compounds without recourse to any level of government. A community leader in Idogbo sums up the reality as presented below:

I do not think the Local Government intervention in this regard will mark a significant shift again. We have become our own water boards. Only very few houses are without boreholes now and even those who cannot afford to sink one in their compound usually fetch water from their neighbours' houses for free or for a negligible amount of money. We need them (the Local Government officials) to do something big that we will appreciate instead of this one that they will sink borehole today and after few months it will no longer be functional due to lack of maintenance (Transcript from in-depth interview; March 16, 2021)

Nevertheless, item five indicates that 175 respondents representing 95 percent affirmed that there is a general absence of local government support in the affairs of the community, 3 percent were undecided while only 2 percent disagreed.

Prospects of Local Government involvement in community self-help development initiatives in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha LGAs

Respondents further expressed their opinion by giving feedbacks on the possible contributions the Local Governments involvement will make in entrenching community self-help development initiatives as shown in the table below:

Table 3: Prospects of Local Government involvement in community self-help development initiatives in Oredo and Ikpoba Okha LGAs

S/N	Item	Responses								
		Idogbo (89 Respondents)			Amagba (94 Respondents)			Aggregate (183 Respondents)		
		A	UD	D	A	UD	D	A	UD	D
1	Local Government expert involvement in community self-help initiatives will promote development in the area	83 (93)	4 (5)	2 (2)	82 (87)	9 (10)	3 (3)	165 (90)	13 (7)	5 (3)
2	Local Government partnership in community security self-help initiatives will promote development in the area	88 (99)	1 (1)	-	89 (95)	5 (5)	-	177 (97)	6 (4)	-
3	Local Government collaboration with the community to provide pipe-borne water will improve the living standard in the area	89 (100)	-	-	81 (86)	12 (13)	1 (1)	170 (93)	12 (6)	1 (1)
4	Local Government supervision of community layouts mapping, construction of roads and drains will help to forestall flood and erosion challenges suffered in the area	86 (97)	1 (1)	2 (2)	81 (86)	3 (3)	10 (11)	167 (91)	4 (2)	12 (7)
5	Local Government support towards the provision of power infrastructure will improve the living standard of residents in the area.	89 (100)	-	-	77 (82)	14 (15)	3 (3)	166 (90)	14 (8)	3 (2)

Field Survey (2021)

In table three, item one indicates 90 percent of the respondents agreed that local government expert involvement in community self-help initiatives will promote development in the area, 3 percent disagreed while 7 percent were neutral. This position was further reinforced by the opinion expressed by a landlord in Amagba community:

The problem of poorly planned neighborhoods you see in this community is caused by the absence of government oversight especially the Local Government. Most of the members of the community development associations (CDAs), even though they have been officially proscribed, still operate and they do not have the requisite knowledge and skill; and also do not care about proper layouts which before now our forefathers brought to bear through native intelligence. All they care about now is land grabbing and the money. Have you seen when it rains? Most buildings will almost end up being submerged by floods because the waterways have been sold and built on. The Local Government just need to come and collaborate with them to ensure the right thing is done. Nothing pains the most as having a building one cannot easily access due to the gaps that exist in the community layouts **(Transcript from in-depth interview; March 19, 2021)**

Also, item two indicates that 177 respondents signifying 97 percent of the respondents agreed that local government partnership in community security self-help initiatives will promote development in the area, while 9 percent were undecided. Similarly, 93 percent of the respondents agreed that local government collaboration with the community to provide pipe-borne water will improve the living standard in the area, 1 percent disagreed with 6 percent taking a neutral stance. On this, even though most respondents do not think that lack of local government support impacts negatively on access to pipe-borne water, they however expressed optimism that local government involvement will help to further optimize individual and community self-help interventions. This result is also in tandem with the view expressed a landlord in Amagba community:

...the truth is; intervention cannot be too much. As you know, not everyone has been able to sink their own borehole. So, if the Local Government help in sinking a community borehole here, those who are currently buying water will then save that money for something else. I think it will still be very important for them to think of doing something like that even though I do not personally have need of it **(Transcript from in-depth interview; March 19, 2021)**

More so, item four of the survey shows that 167 respondents indicating 91 percent asserted that local Government supervision of community layouts mapping, construction of roads and drains will help to forestall flood and erosion challenges suffered in the area, 7 percent disagreed while 2 percent were undecided. Finally, item five shows that 90 percent of the respondents agreed that local government support towards the provision of power infrastructure will improve the living standard of residents in the area. While only 2 percent of the respondents disagreed, 8 percent took a neutral position.

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study indicate that community self-help initiatives have substantial effect on the development of Amagba Community in Oredo and Idogbo in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas of Edo State. The study agrees with Wordu & Azunwo (2017) who observed that the involvement of local people in project execution gives them a sense of ownership of the projects and enhances capacity, learning and interaction among community residents. The findings are also in sync with the position of Ogunleye & Oladeinde (2013) that the conception of initiatives and best of the exceptional responsibility rest on the occupants of the community concerned.

Thus, the findings of this study establish that community self-help development efforts to provide security, pipe-borne water, community layouts mapping, accessible roads and drainages; and power (electricity) infrastructures promote development in the sampled areas. Also, the participation of individuals in decision making in community self-help initiatives promotes sustainable development in the Local Government areas. This is instructive as most respondents affirmed that the level of insecurity in their area was on the high before the introduction of community vigilantes. In other words, the help of community security outfits restored peace in most communities and reduced crime to barest minimum. Nevertheless, since there is no public water supply infrastructure in the sampled communities, property owners result to sinking of boreholes in their compounds, and also supply to other residents who could not afford to do same either for free or for a fee. Because this practice is now proliferated, most residents of the sampled areas do not consider the lack of Local Government support in this regard as impacting negatively on the well-being of the locals. In terms of provision of electricity, respondents stated that even though power infrastructure had been privatized, they were still largely responsible for the purchase, installation and maintenance of power

infrastructures like transformers and electric poles in their communities. Also, the fact that these infrastructures are quite expensive demand that residents of the communities will either have to seek external support to procure them or stay in darkness.

Furthermore, the dearth of technical expertise and inadequate funding of community self-help initiatives are some of the key challenges facing development at the community level. In fact, respondents bemoan the fact that community efforts towards security, layouts mapping, construction of accessible roads and drainages, provision of pipe-borne water and provision of power infrastructures largely lack Local Government support in the area. It was affirmed that the non-involvement of Local Government in planning and execution of community self-help initiatives undermines their developmental efforts. In practical terms, the lack of Local Government support in terms of planning, funding and implementation of community layouts and construction of roads in the sampled areas give credence to the unintended consequences of poorly executed community self-help developmental efforts like flooding, erosion and urban slum. The prevailing circumstance therefore implies that to have a significant and sustainable development at the community level, there has to be an effective collaboration between the Local Government and the local communities.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that the mandate of Local Government is to foster development at the grassroots. It, however, identifies the challenges of Local Government to range from State Government domineering tendencies and the usurpation of local government authority, inadequate funding, diversion and misappropriation of funds, lack of visionary leadership and dearth of skilled technical and professional staff to carry out their mandate as major challenges constraining the Local Government in Nigeria including Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Areas. It however established that for the mandate to be achieved sustainably, a collaborative partnership between residents of communities and the Local Government have to be prioritized.

Finally, community participation in any development endeavor is an important element and a sure path to speedy community development in Nigeria in view of the fact that most communities have laid down structures to ensure the effective participation of residents in projects they consider as having positive

impacts on their lives and livelihoods (Adejumobi, 2010). Since sustainable development is what every community yearns for, the study establishes that projects identified, planned, executed and managed by the community themselves in collaboration with the Local Governments will outlive those without any technical, funding and supervisory support from the Local Government.

8. Recommendations

In view of the findings from the study, the following points are recommended for implementation:

- Oredo and Ikpoba Okha Local Government Councils in Nigeria should strengthen their funding, technical and supervisory capacities in order to serve as an enabler of community self-help initiatives.
- The Local Government Councils should enhance the activities of local vigilantes through proper profiling and funding support in order to prevent any unintended consequences.
- The Local Government Councils should establish a special Department to coordinate community self-help development initiatives. This Department should be saddled with the responsibility to provide technical assistance for community self-help projects like layouts mapping, roads and drainages construction to forestall reversed development outcomes like flood and erosion.
- The Local Government should develop guidelines for community initiatives. For example, instead of individuals sinking boreholes in their compounds arbitrarily in the community, they can collectively sink a central borehole that will be connected to households in order to forestall future ecological risk.

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