

Determinants of Youth Participation in Change Programmes in Rural Nigeria

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND STATEMENT

Several attempts have been made at defining youths, yet no universal definition has been achieved. However, United Nations (1985) postulated that youths are those young people between the age brackets of 12-24 years. Similarly, Population Reference Bureau (1996) declared that over one and half billion people are between 10-24 years, accounting for almost 30% of the world's total population. Main while from UNESCO's perspective, youths are culturally defined. In this regard, youths are perceived from social point of view. That is, individuals or persons in a particular society that are considered youths by that society. This position is further corroborated by the National Youths Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme in Nigeria. The National Youth Service Corps Decree No. 24 was formerly promulgated on 22nd May 1973. The purpose of the scheme is primarily to imbue Nigerian Youths with the spirit of selfless services to the community, and to emphasize the spirit of oneness and brotherhood of all Nigerians irrespective of cultural or social background. Under this arrangement, all graduates under the age of 30 years qualify to participate in the programme. Therefore, in Nigeria, all those below the age of 30 years are considered to be youths. This definition also recognizes the age at which candidates qualify to enroll as students in Nigerian University. Prospective students must be above 15 years.

Apparently, different societies and organizations will continue to define youths in way most applicable to their situations. Though age is acknowledged in many societies as a basis for defining the cultural and social characteristics of human beings and for the formation of their mutual relations, common activities and for differences in allocation of social roles irrespective of individual's gender. In general, within the lifespan of an individual, the period of transition from childhood to pure adult

is referred to as youth. In this period, the individual is no longer a child ready to undertake adult roles and responsibilities. For instance, in primitive societies, it is a period when different forms of initiations or ceremonies are observed.

The life of a youth is characterized by special attributes that make youths unique. Some of these include active and restlessness, sociable, gregarious, energetic and tireless, faster rate of physical development, adventurous and risk bearing, dynamic, creative, curious and very inquisitive, emotionally unstable, fantasy seeking or utopian world seekers, hero-worshipping, etc. The problem of the youths is how to manage these characteristics or qualities for positive societal development and not the youths as individuals perse. Consequently, Nigerian Youths like their counterparts in other parts of the world are faced with several problems that could affect their lives, times and contributions to national development.

1.1 The Concept of Participation in Change Programmes

Development scholars are of opinion that participation is a pre-requisite to development. However, many efforts by governments, international bodies, local organizations and non-governmental organizations working in the area of poverty alleviation, in the past few decades did not achieve the desired results in terms of positive change and sustainable development. This is evident from the number of people in Nigeria as well as other African countries living in desperation and poverty; not being able to cater for their basic human needs is ever increasing (Immink and Olagoke, 1997).

In Nigeria, where positive change is achieved, it often will not stand the test of time after external interventions had ceased. This is evident from the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) supported by World Bank loans in Nigeria. Development initiative at the local or grassroots level is worsened when targets of

such programmes are either left worse off than before or the project measures were not relevant to the needs and aspirations of the people. This situation calls for participation in change programmes, where interventions designed to improve existing circumstances of the people should start and end with target of change. Thus, such approaches should enhance self-reliance among communities and reduce dependence on external interventions by involving people in poverty alleviation right from needs assessment, prioritizing needs, identifying solutions, adequate planning, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

1.2 The Change Agents Methodology (CAM)

According to Burkey and Bitature (1997), the Change Agents Methodology (CAM) believes that sustainable development cannot be imposed from the outside. The people must discover the need to change their own situation and work together to effect that change in their own direction. Hence, its methodology is built on the process of development carried on by individual men and women working together for their own development.

To achieve sustainable development, individuals must become critically aware of themselves and their behaviours. They must become critically conscious of their limitations and opportunities for self-development. It is against this background that for sustainable agricultural development to be achieved in Nigeria, Youths participation becomes imperative. Hence, youths must discover the need to change their own mis-directed priorities, shed their dependency thinking, gain skills and knowledge for self-empowerment and conscientisation. Consequently, youths are able to participate in economic development, as well as social and economic developments of their communities.

The foregoing led to the need to identify the determinants of youth participation in change programmes and reflect upon the situation of youths in a rural community in Southwest Nigeria.

1.3 Specific Objectives of the Study

- i) Determine the social and personal characteristics of youths in Iddo Community;

- ii) Identify the factors affecting youths participation in change programmes;
- iii) Determine the rural-urban migration tendencies of the youths;
- iv) Identify the change programmes available to youths in Iddo Community.

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses

- i) There is no significant relationship between awareness and participation of youths in change programmes.
- ii) There is no significant relationship between availability of incentives and youths participation in change programmes.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Area of Study

The study area is Iddo community in Oyo State. Iddo is a rural community outskirts of Ibadan metropolis. It is located in the Southwest part of Oyo State. It has a population of about 18,000 inhabitants. There are seven other communities that share similar characteristics - Awotan, Akingo, Apete, Alaro, Apata, Owode, Omi-Adio communities.

2.2 Sampling Procedure and Sampling Size

The target population of the study comprised of youths within the age of 14 to 30 years. A total of 80 youths were randomly selected. Stratified sampling technique was used in selecting both male and female respondents respectively. Household selection procedure was used where 20% of the household identified by the Ba'ale (community leader) were randomly selected. In each household two male and one female respondents within the age bracket of 14 -30 years were interviewed. This ratio is because of more male population in households since females get married earlier than males. Who will remain even after marriage but girls will automatically relocate to the husband's house after marriage.

2.3 Study Variables

The dependant variable for this study is participation in change programmes. Therefore youths perspectives as to social expectations

were measured using knowledge test or awareness of existing change programmes and their participation status in such programmes. In another dimension, the independent variables of the study include; social and personal characteristics of youths, rural urban migration tendencies, availability of incentives and severity of constraints to youths participation in change programmes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Social and Personal Characteristics of Youths

Table 1: Social and personal characteristics of youths (n = 80)

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	50	65.5
Female	30	37.5
<i>Religion:</i>		
Christianity	55	68.9
Islam	21	26.3
Traditional	4	4.8
<i>Educational Level</i>		
No formal	7	8.8
Primary	3	5.0
Education		
Secondary	30	37.5
education		
Tertiary	32	40.0
Adult Literacy	5	6.2
Others	2	2.5

Table 1 shows that 62.5% of the youths are male while 37.5% are female. This does not however prove that there are more males than females in Iddo community.

The table also shows that 68% of the respondents are Christians, while 26% are Muslims, only 4% are traditionalists.

As regards educational attainment, eight (8%) percent of the respondents had no formal education at all. Only 50% had primary education, while 37% and 40% had secondary and tertiary education respectively. These findings reveal that a majority of the youths in the community have achieved some reasonable level of education.

3.2 Awareness of Change Programmes

Table 2 shows whether youths are aware of change programmes or not. For agricultural programmes, 81% are aware of the Back to Land

Table 2: Awareness of existing change programmes

Change Programmes	Awareness status	
	Yes	No
<i>Agricultural Programmes</i>		
Back to Land	65 (81.25)	15 (18.2)
Communal Labour	56 (70)	24 (30)
Exchange Labour	61 (76.25)	19 (23.75)
Hired Labour	67 (83.75)	13 (16.25)
<i>Health Vanguard</i>		
Campaign against AIDS	76 (95)	4 (5)
Exclusive breast feeding	69 (82.25)	11 (13.75)
Child Immunization	76 (95)	4 (5)
Environmental Sanitation	78 (97.5)	2 (2.5)
Family Planning Programme	75 (93.75)	5 (6.25)
<i>Education Programmes</i>		
Adult Literacy	64 (80)	16 (20)
Mass Literacy	69 (86.25)	11 (13.75)
<i>Community Development Programmes</i>		
Construction of roads	65 (85)	12 (15)
Construction of town halls	57 (71.25)	23 (28.75)
Construction of bus-stop	62 (77.5)	18 (22.5)
Construction of health centres	64 (80)	16 (20)
Vigilante Group	59 (73.75)	21 (26.25)
Others (n = 23)	17 (73.91)	6 (26.09)
<i>Skill acquisition Programmes</i>		
Skill acquisition (n = 73)	62 (84.93)	11 (15.07)

*Percentage in parenthesis.

Programme and 70% are aware of Communal Labour. Another 76% are aware of Exchange Labour and 83% of Hired Labour.

On health vanguards, 95% are aware of the campaign against AIDS, while 82% are aware of the current programme on exclusive breast feeding. A high percentage is aware of the national environmental sanitation programme (97%), while 93% are aware of the family planning programme. Eighty percent are aware of adult literacy campaign and 86% are aware of the mass literacy campaign.

On community development programmes, 85% are aware of the construction of roads, constructions of town halls 71%; of bus stop construction 77% and 80% are aware of health centres. Only lower percentages are not aware of these programmes.

3.3 Youth's Participation Status in Change Programmes

These findings suggest that since awareness level is very high it will facilitate the introduction or mobilization of youths' to participate in these

programmes given the significant role of awareness stage in change programme implementation.

Table 3: Youths participation in change programmes

<i>Change Programmes</i>	<i>Participation Status</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Agricultural Programmes</i>		
Back to hand	35 (81.25)	45 (56.25)
Communal Labour	26 (32.5)	54 (67.5)
Exchange Labour	30 (37.5)	50 (62.5)
Hired Labour	27 (33.75)	53 (66.25)
<i>Health Vanguard</i>		
Campaign against AIDS	36 (45)	44 (55)
Exclusive breast feeding	25 (31.25)	55 (67.5)
Child immunization	40 (50)	40 (50)
Environmental Sanitation	72 (90)	8 (10)
Family Planning Programme	30 (37.5)	50 (62.5)
<i>Educational Programmes</i>		
Adult Literacy	31 (38.75)	49 (61.25)
Mass Literacy	35 (43.75)	45 (56.25)
<i>Community Development Programmes</i>		
Construction of roads	30 (37.5)	50 (62.5)
Construction of town halls	23 (28.75)	57 (71.25)
Construction of bus-stop	15 (18.75)	65 (81.25)
Construction of health	27 (33.75)	53 (65.25)
Vigilante Group	22 (33.75)	58 (72.5)
Others (n = 23)	9 (42.10)	11 (57.90)
<i>Skill acquisition Programmes</i>		
Skill acquisition (n = 73)	62 (84.93)	11 (15.07)

*Percentage in parenthesis.

From table 3, youths' participation in Agricultural programmes shows that 43% had participated in Back to Land Programme. Thirty-two percent had participated in communal labour while 37% and 33% had participated in exchange labour and hired labour respectively. These percentages indicate the low level of youth participation in these programmes, despite their high level of awareness. However, with regards to health vanguards, 45% had participated in the campaign against AIDS, while 50% had in the past participated in the child immunization programme.

A lower proportion of the respondents (37%) had participated in family planning and exclusive breast feeding (37%) campaigns. Similarly, data available on educational programmes show that 38% and 43% had participated in Adult literacy and Mass literacy campaigns.

The higher level of participation in adult literacy could be attributed to the fact that the

study focused only on youths. The table further reveals the level of participation in community development programmes. For instance, 37% had participated in the construction of roads in the community. A lower proportion (28%) participated in the construction of town halls, bus stops (18%) and health centres (33%). Similarly, only 27% had participated in the formation of vigilante groups. Hence, it is pertinent to note the low youth's participation in socially inclined programmes that affects their lives directly and the community in general. Therefore, it is time to start thinking about new strategies of mobilizing youths for participation in change programmes.

3.4 Youths Rural-urban Migration Tendencies

Table 4 shows that 57% of the respondents do visit urban centre very often and 26% go to urban areas once in a while, only 16% seldom do so.

Table 4: Rural-Urban migration tendencies

<i>Migration tendencies</i>	<i>Frequ-ency</i>	<i>Perce-ntage (%)</i>
<i>Frequency of Visitation to Urban Areas</i>		
Very often	46	57.5
Once in a while	21	26.25
Seldom do	13	16.25
Total	60	100
<i>Period of Time Spent in Urban Areas</i>		
Some few hours	19	23.75
Some few days	21	26.25
Some weeks	14	17.5
Some months	26	32.5
Total	80	100
<i>Permanent Movement to Urban Areas</i>		
Yes	40	50
No	16	20
Undecided	24	30
Total	80	100
<i>Aspiration to Participate in Change Programmes</i>		
Yes	50	62.5
No	10	12.5
Undecided	20	25
Total	80	100

Twenty-three percent of the youth spend a few hours in urban areas whenever they visit, while only 17% spend some few weeks. The result shows that a high percentage (32%) spends some months whenever they visit the urban areas.

Fifty percent of the respondents said they would like to move permanently to the urban areas, while 20% prefer to remain in the rural area.

The high percentage of youths who would rather move to urban areas permanently attributes their response to the fact that there are more infrastructural and social amenities in the urban areas than in their local communities. Therefore, infrastructural development in rural areas is the only suitable option that will stem rural urban migration in Nigeria. Thus it is sufficed to say that such intervention will guarantee not only participation in change programmes but will also reduce the pressure on urban infrastructure and violent youth crimes.

Youths in the study have high aspiration to participate in change programmes (62.5%), only 12% would not participate (Table 4).

3.4 Perceived Constraints to Youths Participation in Change Programmes

Table 5 shows that 33% and 28% of the youths agreed that lack of incentives (materials and financial) constitute severe and moderate constraints respectively in their participation while in change programmes.

A majority of the respondents (48%) see political constraints as a moderate constraint, only 21% viewed this as a severe constraint. Thirty-three percent of the youths perceive economic constraint a severe constraint while 39% viewed this as moderate constraint, 20% agreed that it is a low constraint.

In another perspective, 22.5% consider administrative constraints a severe problem to them while 42% said it is moderate, 20% of the

youth perceived it as a low constraint, while the remaining 15% will not see it as a constraint to their participation in change programmes.

Social constraints covered socio-cultural restrictions such as religion, gender and social norms. However, 20% agreed to the fact that it is a low constraint. Though higher proportion of youths do not see it as a constraint (52%).

3.6 Testing of Hypotheses

3.6.1 Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between awareness and participation of youths in change programme.

The result of chi-square analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between awareness and participation in change programmes ($\chi^2 = 29$; $P < .05$). Therefore, it is necessary to make youths aware of programmes to ensure their subsequent participation.

3.6.1 Hypothesis two: There is no significant relationship between availability of incentives and youths participation in change programme.

The result of chi-square analysis shows that there is a significant relationship between availability of incentives and participation in change programmes. Hence, incentives are positive motivating factors in mobilizing youths for change programmes.

Table 6: Results of Chi-square analysis

Variables	df	χ^2	Probability level (P)
1. Awareness and participation	1	2	*
2. Availability of incentives and participation	1	98.08	*

* Significant; $P < .05$

Table 5: Constraints to youths participation in change programmes

Constraints	Degree of Severity				Total
	High	Moderate	Low	None	
Lack of incentives	27(33.75)*	23(28.75)	20(50)	10(12.5)	80(100)
Political constraint	17(21.25)	39(48.75)	21(26.25)	13(16.25)	80(100)
Economic constraints	27(33.75)	29(36.25)	16(20)	8(10)	80(100)
Social constraints	12(15)	10(12.5)	16(20)	42(52.5)	80(100)
Administrative Constraints	18(22.5)	34(42.5)	16(20)	12(15)	80(100)
Personal Constraints	17(21.25)	15(18.75)	16(20)	32(50)	80(100)

*Percentage in parenthesis.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals that most of the youths have achieved reasonable level of formal education. However, it's pathetic that a lower proportion of the youth do participate in community based change programmes. Also, rural-urban migration tendencies of the youths are very high and should be attributed to lack of infrastructural facilities. Similarly, lack of incentives is a major constraint to youth participation in change programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings from this study, the following recommendations are made towards effective exploration and mobilization of youths to participate in change programmes.

- i) In recognition of the high literacy and educational achievement of youths, development agencies, (governmental and non-governmental) should mobilize youth as change agents through formal or informal structures such as youth vanguards for specific programmes. Therefore, it is recommended that youth should be encouraged to form associations for specific change programme initiatives.
- ii) Youth involved in change programmes should be encouraged to participate or continue to participate with incentives made available to them. This will boost their morale and ensure successful outing always. For instance, since there is high incidence of educational attainment, scholarship programmes should be instituted as a continuous incentive for enhanced participation.
- iii) Improvement in community based infrastructural facilities to stem the rate of rural-urban migration as well as unbated urban crime perpetuated by urban youths.
- iv) Change programmes should start with the target of change. Therefore, youth should

be considered at the conceptualization of various programmes based on their peculiar circumstances, aspirations and visions.

KEY WORDS Youth. Participation. Change Programmes and Incentives

ABSTRACT The paper investigated the constraints to youths' participation in change programmes in Iddo Community of Oyo State, Nigeria. A total of 80 youths' between 14-30 years participated in the study. Findings from the study reveal that a majority of the youths in the community have achieved reasonable levels of education-primary (50%), secondary (37%) and tertiary (40%). They have also participated in the past and ongoing change programmes such as Back to Land (43%), Exchange Labour (30%) and Child Immunization programme (56%). The major constraints of youth's participation are lack of incentives (33%) and economic constraints (33%). Findings further reveal that there is a significant relationship between availability of incentives and participation in change programmes ($\chi^2 = 8.08$; $P < 0.05$). The study recommend among others scholarship programmes as incentives for youths and improvement in rural infrastructure to stem rural communities.

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