

GAUGING THE POTENCY OF PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Participatory communication emerged as a paradigm shift from the top-bottom approach in development practice. The bottom-top approach emphasises the need for community members' active participation in their communities' development process; starting from identification of felt needs, projects design and implementation stages which gives them a sense of ownership of the development and guarantees the sustainability of the development outcomes in their communities. The study assessed the efficacy of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency in promoting sustainable community development in the state using participatory development approach as against the traditional top-bottom development approach. Community members participation in the development process of their communities, empowered them to take ownership and ensure the sustainability of the projects executed in their communities. The study is anchored on Participatory theory. It

adopted descriptive survey designed method. Questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection and the rationale behind the used of method is to elicit responses from the sampled respondents. A total of 315 copies of questionnaire were distributed but 300 copies were retrieved and found valid for data analysis. Responses to the questions were collected and computed using simple percentage. The population of the study comprises of entire Plateau state but the study focused on 6 local government areas: Jos East, Bassa, Mangu, Bokkos, Langtang North and Mikang. The L.G.As were purposively selected to represent the state. The findings of the study showed that the agency's involvement of the citizens in the development of their communities gives the people sense of ownership and guaranteed the sustainability of the projects executed in their communities. It concluded that the adoption and application of participatory communication in development practice has empowered the poor citizens to decide the kind of developmental intervention they desired without them funding the projects. The study recommended that efforts be made to inculcate participatory approach in governance at the federal, state and local governments to ensure that only people's oriented projects are executed in rural communities across Nigeria.

Keywords: Participatory Communication, Sustainable Development, Community Development, Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency

Introduction

Participatory communication, otherwise known as the bottom-up approach to development initiative, is a veritable tool for promoting rural community sustainable development in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. Community members' participation in the development process of their communities through a participatory approach and community-driven development is key to the completion of the development intervention and the sustainability of the projects executed in their communities. Development concepts such as participation, communication, empowerment and sustainability are the centre of any meaningful development (Blackman, 2003). The history of participation can be traced to the practice of democracy across the globe. Before replacing the top-bottom development approach to developing countries with a bottom-top approach with certain democratic elements and principles, rural communities were deprived and excluded in the development process and provision of basic social amenities to their communities.

Participation is considered an important tool for securing community members' participation in decision-making and providing equal opportunities for the community members who are the beneficiaries of development outcomes in their communities. Community participation or beneficiaries' active participation in all the stages of development interventions is increasingly gaining attention in both development practice and discourse globally. While buttressing this fact, Aga, Noorderhaven and Vallejo (2017) hinted that community participation entails active involvement of community members who are beneficiaries in the development process of their communities. The active participation of community members in development projects empowered them to be decision-makers and drivers of the development process, which motivated them to take ownership of the development outcome and ensure the projects' sustainability in partnership with the development facilitators. Development projects are essential to raising up communities and improving their general well-being, but the effectiveness and durability of such initiatives primarily rely on efficient communication strategies that actively include community members. Jelili, Oyeniya, and Folorunsho (2020) affirmed that community participation enables the intended beneficiaries to partake in key

decision-making for the project and gives the beneficiaries the opportunity to have greater control of the project.

The beneficiaries' participation gives them a voice in collectively identifying and meeting their felt needs. Many community development projects in developing countries were not sustainable because of their supply-driven or top-bottom development approach, which ignored the place and importance of community partnership and ownership of projects. Monaledi (2016) highlights some of the benefits of community participation, including the building capacity of the beneficiaries, increased project efficiency, incorporation of knowledge, and greater sustainability of the projects executed. To a large extent, the sustainability of any community project depends on the active participation of beneficiaries.

In 2009, during the tenure of Robert B. Zoellick, the World Bank entered into a partnership with the Federal Government of Nigeria to facilitate the transformation of rural communities through the bank's Community Driven Development using a participatory development approach. Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) is a World Bank-assisted project for poverty reduction intervention aimed at sustainably increasing the poor's access to social infrastructure and natural resources. The bank employs the Community Driven Development (CDD) approach. The Plateau State Government 2007 established an agency known as the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency (PLASCSDA) to partner with the World Bank to develop the rural communities in the state sustainably. This study evaluates the efficacy of PLASCSDA's participatory approach in implementing the World Bank's CSDA in rural communities across Plateau State.

Conceptual Clarifications

Development

The concept of development implies growth, progress or advancement in a person's or society's life. It is also a total process of growth and improvement in the society's human, economic, social and cultural spheres (Bwakan, 2022). It also implies a change in relationships with the physical, socio-economic and political environment instead of being controlled by it, a change from impotency to potency. UNDP (2004) defines the term

“development” as a form of social change involving new concepts in a social system to improve people’s livelihood. Dandaura (2021) describes the development as a multifaceted process that seeks to improve the level and quality of human lives, raising people’s living conditions, increasing freedom of choice and creating a conducive atmosphere for people to grow their self-esteem and dignity. Soola (2003) sees development as a change toward patterns of society that allows better realisation of human values, allows a society greater control over its environment and political destiny, and enables individuals to increased control over themselves. Todar and Smith (2003) opined that development involves both the quality and quantity of life. Quality of life refers to opportunities and availability for social, health, and educational concerns. Quantity of life involves the people's economic and political participation. This implies that development means social transformation, advancement, and improvement of society that facilitates the realisation of people’s potential, building individuals' self-confidence and dignity, and fulfilling their dreams aimed at liberating people from poverty, hunger, and backwardness. Development increases man’s ability to dominate himself, become independent and more proficient in what he does, and become critical in outlook.

Participation

According to Bentu-Tengya and Tengya (2019), the history of participation can be traced to the late 1990s when it became a watchword in development practice. The idea of participation was conceived as citizens’ engagement in decision-making in a mutually beneficial and deliberative manner (Ugwu & Aruma, 2019). It is the right of the people to participate in the decision-making process concerning their affairs. Participation is a call for genuine involvement of the poor rural communities in the development process of their communities, which can be both a human and a physical advancement in society. However, Bessette (2004) sees participation as a planned activity based on a participatory process that facilitates dialogue among stakeholders around a common development problem or goal, while Mefalopulos (2008) opines that participation is at the heart of any meaningful development. Olatunde (2021) asserts that for participation to occur, communication must play a pivotal

role through dialogue. If people are to work together, they have to create something in common in their mutual discussions and actions, rather than someone who assumes the position of superiority and begins to order the people around. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) corroborate that engaging stakeholders is all about carrying the representatives of various groups and associations along in development initiatives and seeking a broader consensus. Participation increases community members' sense of ownership and guarantees the sustainability of a project executed in their communities. For effective and genuine participation to occur, there must be a horizontal flow of communication, which should be based on dialogue.

According to Hancock (2006), participation implies the involvement of ordinary people in a social change process. It ensures that stakeholders can share knowledge, exchange ideas and knowledge, identify their problems, identify the desired course of action, plan and implement lasting solutions to those problems. It guarantees achievement of development programmes by community members, stakeholders and external stakeholders in a community. It is a process that ensures that people are empowered to identify their felt needs and come up with action plans for solving those needs, implement the solutions and own the outcome of the implementation.

Communication

Communication is the exchange of information, ideas, messages and signals between persons with a view to convey meaning in the process. It was also defined as a process of giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, seek information, give information or express emotions. Asemah (2011) asserts that communication is a process that involves all acts of transmitting messages to channels which link people to the languages and symbolic codes which are used to transmit messages; it includes the means by which messages are received and stored as the rules, customs, beliefs and conventions, which define and regulate human relationship and event.

However, communication is key to the success of any community development because is used to secured the consent of the people about the development initiative that is about to take place in the community. Also, the success of individuals, organizations and institutions as well as the development of any community depends largely on the effectiveness of communication flow among stakeholders as pointed out by Bentu-Tenggya and Tengya (2019). Consequently, communication is a basic necessity for human existence because human beings cannot do without communicating with one another. However, despite the aforementioned definitions, the common definition of the term is that, it is a process of sharing information, feelings, and ideas between two or more people through previously agreed language, code, sign or symbol.

Community Participation

Community participation can be described as a process whereby community members mobilise themselves to participate in groups as community members to address their problems to improve people's living conditions in their concerned community. Leeuwis (2004) stresses that community participation is considered as an important component of any successful development intervention in society and that non-participation or non-involvement of community members in the process of executing a project is seen as the cause of failure of many development interventions in development countries.

Mefalopulos (2008:32) enumerates the four main stages of participation to include passive participation, participation by consultation, participation by collaboration and empowerment participation. While discussing the importance of community participation in the process of executing people's oriented projects in rural communities, Ugwu and Aruma (2011) highlighted some of the benefits of community participation in sustainable community development to include:

- i. the provision of meaningful change for improved living conditions of the beneficiaries in the participating communities.
- ii Community Participation as a Mechanism to Address Community Problems
- iii. Provision of Learning Opportunities
- iv Improvement in Peaceful Co-existence among Community Members

On the areas of community participation in sustainable community development, Ugwu and Aruma (2019) pinpointed four major areas of community members' active participation in promoting sustainable development to include:

- i. Assessment of Community Needs
- ii. Community Development Plan
- iii. Community Mobilisation
- iv. Community Development Project and Programme Implementation.

This implies that development partners can partner the community members by involving them in all the stages of executing projects in communities; starting from collaborating with members of the benefiting communities in assessing the needs of the community, designing workable and realistic development plan that is geared towards developing the community, mobilising members of the community to actively participate in the process of executing developmental projects in the community by either providing labour or financial support and then executing or implementing community development programmes and projects.

Community Development

The concept of community development is a process whereby community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems (Frank & Smith, 1999). Community Development is a skilled process and an approach based on the belief that communities cannot be helped unless the people themselves agree that there are problems and that require both internal and external to address those problems. Community development is all about people's active participation in executing development initiatives in their communities. A Chinese Philosopher and Poet, Lau Tse summarizes the whole essence of the participatory development approach when he remarks that: *"Go and meet your people, live and stay with them, love them, work with them. Begin with what they have, plan and develop from what they know, and in the end, when the work is over, they will say: 'we did it ourselves.'"* This quotation aptly captures the essence of participatory communication, particularly in terms of community development.

It can be described as a type of development targeted at the beneficiaries of the development initiative. Anaeto and Solo-Anaeto (2010) revealed that community development is based on the idea that for development to be sustainable, the people must first see the need for development and take appropriate steps towards the development in their communities; hence, all segments of the community must be actively engaged in discussing and identifying their needs and collectively working towards meeting their needs. This implies that genuine community development cannot be actualised without the active participation of the community members in the development process because they need to be allowed to freely identify and define their needs, discuss those needs and then workout solutions to their developmental needs in a sustainable manner as against the top-bottom development approach that excludes the people in the process. Community development is all about creating awareness to help people identify their needs and empowering them with skills and knowledge that will motivate them to solve those needs and problems.

Sustainable Development

The term “Sustainable Development” was coined in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm, and 170 countries signed the important document on sustainable development at the Earth Summit in Rio-de-Janerio (Enwo-Irem, 2013). The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), also known as Brundtland Report in 1987, used the term sustainable development in an article titled: “Our Common Future” (World Bank, 2019). Sustainable development is a type of development that meets the present's needs without compromising the future generation's ability to meet their own needs. This implies improving the quality of life of the present generation without necessarily abusing natural resources but rather preserving the resources for future generations. Samu (2023) asserts that sustainable development is built gradually, step by step, from simple achievable issues, family issues, and then moving to more difficult and communal broad-based organisational issues which allow people to develop a large vision and confidence in the local responsibilities, thereby getting familiar with doing bigger things in a graduated manner. He further explains that community members usually start with simple tasks such as

cleaning the streets, digging communal wells, drainages, toilets and schools and then graduate to thinking of serious capital community infrastructure improvement programme for the benefits of the entire community which made sustainability of such projects as duty bound on community members. Samu (2023:76) says:

This builds their confidence till they attempt more gigantic projects like creating a context in which real meaningful children education can occur. This may include teaching ordinary people how to effectively participate in local and national politics, how to engage effectively in the politics of negotiations and cooperation, and democratic principles. If peace is installed, development can be contemplated by any community through the efficient direction of development professionals.

From the above explanations of the concept, it is clear that sustainable development can only be achieved through effective engagement or participation of the community members in executing projects in their communities. The participation usually starts from communal development efforts such as constructing drainages, toilets, wells and schools and then graduates to big projects in the community that will greatly benefit community members. The rationale for starting the development efforts with simple tasks is to encourage active participation of community members and then graduate them to gigantic development projects based on their level of commitment in order to have everybody on board during the development efforts and when they are fully involved in the process, sustainability of such projects is guaranteed at the end of the development efforts. Samu (2023) asserts that sustainable development is built gradually, step by step, from simple achievable issues, family issues, and then moving to more difficult and communal broad-based organisational issues which allow people to develop a large vision and confidence in the local responsibilities, thereby getting familiar with doing bigger things in a graduated manner.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the significance of Participatory Communication as key components for successful developmental project execution, yet very little or no effort has been made to incorporate the concept into development initiatives execution either by Federal, State, Local Governments or

Non-Governmental Organisations. Many projects initiated and executed by governments at all levels using the traditional top-bottom development approach were criticised for failure to meet the felt needs of the targeted beneficiaries due to the non-involvement of the benefitting communities in the process of executing such projects, starting from the felt needs identification, project designs and implementation stages. The approach is blamed for the slow pace of development, including in Nigeria. The government's development approach, known as the top-bottom approach, excluded the beneficiaries in the process of executing development projects, making the sustainability of such projects in many communities a major hindrance to community development. Bottom-top emerged as a paradigm shift in development practice advocating for the active participation of beneficiaries in the process of executing projects in communities that the World Bank is championing and sponsoring people's centred development using Community Driven Development to execute Community and Social Development Projects in developing countries.

However, the Plateau state government has taken advantage of the World Bank's partnership with the Nigerian government and established the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency to promote sustainable community development. The PLCSDA usually secures the involvement and buy-in of community stakeholders in the project execution cycle to guarantee the sustainability of the projects executed in their communities.

Objectives of Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To ascertain the level of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency's utilisation of participatory communication in the process of executing projects in benefitting communities across the state.
- ii. To assess the extent of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency efficacy in promoting community development in the state.
- iii. To determine the level of sustainability of projects executed by the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency in some communities within the state

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

- i. What is the level of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency's Utilization of participatory communication in the process of executing projects in benefitting communities across the state?
- ii. To what extent is the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency efficacy in promoting community development in the state?
- iii. What is the level of sustainability of projects executed by the Plateau State Community and Community Social Development Agency in some communities within the state?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Participatory theory. The theory is associated with the works of Paulo Freire in 1983. He is regarded as a renowned scholar whose critical pedagogy, as captured in his book titled "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed," became relevant to the emergence of the concept of Participatory Development Communication. Anaeto, Onabajo, and Osifeso (2008) say that the theory stresses the significance of the cultural identity of local communities, as well as democratisation and participation at all levels, be it local, national, or international. The theory stresses reciprocal collaboration throughout all levels of participation, and development efforts must be based on faith in the people's capacity to contribute and participate actively in the task of transforming society. The common people are intelligent and can be active agents in change management. Anaeto and Anaeto (2010) highlight some of the assumptions of the theory to include strengthening teamwork between the people and the decision-makers is needed in development processes, securing the attention of decision-makers and the support of the local people, establishing a partnership between the policymakers and different groups for successful implementation of programme and policy and enhances better planning and programme formulation by consulting the people and actively involving them in decision-making that will affect the people. Participatory theory is relevant to this study because it gives an insight into citizens' participation in the development process of their communities. This is because the theory emphasises the need for citizens'

participation in the development cycle for ownership and sustainability of the development initiative.

Participatory Communication

The thrust of the participatory communication approach is to actively engage stakeholders in the project cycle, from beginning to end, with regard to decision-making on developmental initiatives, which facilitates the empowerment of the marginalised communities to drive any development initiatives in their communities in order to give the people a sense of ownership as well as guarantee the sustainability of the project. The people should be genuinely involved in the process, and their opinions and views should be taken during decision-making and the execution of the project in communities to guarantee sustainability. Participatory communication has been adjudged as the answer to why a lot of development initiatives between the 1970s to 1980s failed to achieve the objectives of improving the developing nations due to the non-involvement of stakeholders in the developmental process. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) opined that actively engaging stakeholders from the beginning and seeking a broader consensus around development initiatives has helped in averting conflicts between communities and development partners. Moreover, genuine participation increases local stakeholders' sense of ownership, thus enhancing sustainability.

The application of participatory communication in developmental initiatives is to engage the stakeholders in the development process, from the beginning to end with regard to decision-making on development objectives which also facilitates empowerment. Freire (1997) opines that proper application of participatory communication approach in project cycle, promotes transparency and timely completion of project while non-application of it, often resulted in compromising standards, abandoning of project and even if the projects are completed sustainability becomes a problem because the people are not involved from the onset of the project execution. For effective and genuine participation to occur there must be horizontal flow of information, which should be based on dialogue. Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) opine that the concept of participatory communication is a development approach that is based on

dialogue, which allows the sharing of information, perceptions and opinions among the various stakeholders that facilitate community empowerment, especially the vulnerable and marginalized. For the concept to be genuinely participatory and effective, communication must occur among all parties and should have similar opportunity to influence the outcome of project initiative.

Participatory approach is aimed at taking into account the people's right to participate in decision making process concerning the development of their communities. Participation is a call for genuine involvement of the poor rural communities in the development process ought to manifest in society transformation. Bessette (2004) sees participatory communication as a planned activity based on participatory process, and on the other hand, media and interpersonal communication that facilitates dialogue among different stakeholders, around a common development problem or goal. While Mefalopulos (2008) stresses that participatory communication is at the heart of participation and development. Communication is the glue that connects people's participation and developmental activities together as is difficult to imagine participation without communication.

Brief and Development Approach of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency

The Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency was in 2007 to facilitate sustainable community development. The agency came into existence as a result of the partnership between the Federal Government and World Bank on Community Development programmes which is aimed at fast-tracking the development process of poor rural communities in developing countries.

PLSCSDA is jointly sponsored by the state and federal governments and is a scaled-up project of the pilot Community based Poverty Reduction Project (CPRP), Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Project (LEEMP) and Community and Social Development Project which was later changed to PLSCSDA. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRP) was introduced to carry-out community needs assessment, identification and prioritisation for selecting their micro project in a socially inclusive manner. The micro projects qualified must

be aimed at improving social facilities in rural communities, strengthening and promoting sustainable development, environmental management and generally improve community access to social amenities.

Communities that are desirous of any kind of interventions usually applied to the agency and processing the applications, the agency's needs assessment unit then visits the community to carry-out community needs assessment based on priority needs as indicated by the various groups in the community during the needs assessment interviews of representatives of various community groups.

After selecting a community to benefit from PLSCSDA, the benefitting communities then set-up a Community Project Management Committee (CPMC) to represent the community in managing the project (s). The CPMC leadership structure is made up of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer (PRO) and Auditor. The CPMC leadership is expected to have three (3) women representation and one of which must be a signatory to the CPMC's account.

The financial benchmark of community intervention is 10 million naira and communities are guided to choose projects that will not exceed 10 million naira and communities too are to raise 10 percent of the contract total sum as their contribution to the success of the project execution.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey designed method. Questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. Questionnaire was used to elicit responses from respondents. The study population comprises entire of Plateau state with 3.2 populations (NPC-Census, 2006). The state is made up of 17 Local Government Areas but 6 L.G.As were selected to represent the state. The L.G.As are; Jos East and Bassa (Plateau North Senatorial Districts), Mangu and Bokkos L.G.As (Plateau Central District) and Langtang North and Mikang L.G.As (Plateau South Senatorial District).

The population consist of farmers, religious, youth, women, community development association and traditional leaders in the rural communities in the selected L.G.As. The choice

of the respondents was based on their levels of involvements and knowledge of the subject matter. The reason for the selection of the Local Government Area was due to the fact that, the PLSCSDA's projects are more visible in the 6 L.G.As.

A total size of 300 respondents were purposively selected from the 6 L.G.As in the state. 315 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents but 300 were retrieved and found valid for analysis. Data collected were subjected to quantitative analysis using simple percentage to ascertain weights of opinion to the questionnaire. The formula used for the circulation of the data is presented below:

$$\frac{NR}{TR} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where NR = Number of respondents

TR = Total number of response

100 = is the percentage

1 = is constant

Demographic Data

The structured questions in the questionnaire sought to find out the demographic information of the respondents which includes, gender, age of the respondent and their level of education.

Table 1: Showing the gender distribution of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	185	61.7
Female	115	38.3
Total	300	100 %

Source: Field survey, 2024

Analysis of table 1

From the table above, it can be inferred that male respondents constituted 185 representing 61.7% of the total sampled population while the female population of the sampled study was

115 representing 38.3%. it can be inferred from the above data that the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency gives both gender (female and male) the opportunity to participate in decision making concerning the development of their respective communities.

Table 2: Showing the Age grades of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-30	75	25.0
31-50	90	30.0
51 and above	135	45.0
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Analysis of table 2

From the above table, it can be inferred that the respondents between the ages of 18-30 who are youths constitute 75 representing 25%, another set of youths 31-50 are 90 representing 30% while respondents between the ages of 51 and above constitute 135 representing 45 %. From the above data, it can be inferred that youths between the ages of 18 to 30 and 31-50 constituted the majority of the study population while the respondents between the ages of 51 and above are the minority of the study population.

Table 3: Showing the respondents' educational background

Educational background	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Non-formal	45	15
Primary	81	27
Secondary	94	31.3
Tertiary	80	26.7
Total	300	100

Source: Field Data 2024

Analysis of table 3

From the above table, it can be inferred that 45 representing 15% of the respondents did not acquire formal education, 81 representing 27% only attended primary school while 94 representing 31.3% obtained secondary school certificates and 80 representing 30% acquired tertiary educational qualifications. From the above data, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents are literates as they can easily understand the question. Findings from the interviews showed that the respondents had tertiary education. This was why they were able to volunteer information.

Empirical Data

Table 4: Showing the assessment of community participation in the process of projects execution by the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency.

CP in PLSCSDA	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	268	89.3
No	11	3.7
Undecided	21	7.0
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Analysis of table 4

From the table above, it can be inferred that 268 representing 89.3% respondents said they actively participated in all the stages of projects execution in their communities by PLSCSDA, 11 representing 3.7 % respondents said do not participated in any of the stages of project(s) execution by PLSCSDA's in their communities while 21 representing 7.0 respondents were undecided as to whether they have participated or not in the process of projects execution by the agency in their communities. From the findings of the study, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents had actively participated in the process of projects execution in their communities by PLSCSDA.

Table 5: Showing the level of PLSCSDA's Utilization of Participatory Communication in the process of executing projects in benefitting communities across the state.

Frequency of participation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very high	209	69.7
High	31	10.3
Fair	41	13.7
Low	13	4.3
Undecided	6	2
Total	300	100

Source: Field Data 2024

Analysis of table 5

From the table above, it can be inferred that 209 representing 69.7% of the sampled size rated the level of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency's Utilization of Participatory Communication in the process of executing projects in benefitting communities as "Very High", 31 representing 10.3% rated the agency's level of utilising Participatory Communication in executing projects as "High", 41 representing 13.7% rated it as "Fair" while 13 representing 4.3% rated agency's level of Utilization of Participatory Communication as "Low" and 6 representing 2% were undecided as to whether the PLSCSDA's project execution are participatory or not. From the findings of the data, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents agreed that the PLSCSDA projects executed are participatory.

Table 6: Showing the assessment of the extend of PLSCSDA’s effectiveness in promoting development in communities across the state.

PLSCSDA Development	Community Frequency	Percentage (%)
Large high	216	72
High	63	21
Fair	11	3.7
undecided	10	3.3
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Analysis of table 6

From the table above, it can be inferred that 216 representing 72% respondents rated the extent of PLSCSDA’s effectiveness in promoting development in communities across the state as “Large Extent”, 63 representing 21% rated extent of the agency’s effectiveness in promoting development in communities across the state as “High”, 11 representing 3.7% rated the effectiveness of PLSCSDA in promoting development in communities across the state as effective while 10 representing 3.3% respondents were undecided as to whether the agency is effective or not in promoting development in communities across the state.

It can be inferred from the findings of the study that majority of the respondents rated the efficacy of PLSCSDA in promoting development in communities across the state as very effective while minority of the respondents rated PLSCSDA’s role in promoting community development as low while minority of the respondents were decided as to whether the agency is effective or not in promoting development in communities across the state.

Table 7: Showing the assessment of PLSCSDA's projects sustainability in benefitting communities across the state.

Level of Sustainability	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly	211	70.3
High	54	18
Fair	20	6.7
Undecided	15	5
Total	300	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

Analysis of table 7

From the table above, it can be inferred that 211 representing 70.3% of the respondents rated the extent of the sustainability of projects executed by PLSCSDA across communities in the Plateau state as "Highly", 54 representing 18% rated the extent of sustainability of the projects executed by PLSCSDA across communities in the state as "High" while 20 representing 6.7% rated the sustainability of PLSCSDA's project executed in communities across the state as "Fair" while 15 representing 5% were undecided as to whether the projects executed by PLSCSDA are sustainable or not. From the findings of the study, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents rated the sustainability of PLSCSDA projects executed in the state as highly sustainable. This may not be unconnected with the fact that PLSCSDA's projects are participatory in nature and benefitting communities drive the process of executing projects in their communities while the staff of the PLSCSDA only guide the process.

Discussion of Findings

In solving the statement of the problem of the study, three research questions were put forward to respondents using questionnaire to gather data for this study. The questionnaire was designed based on the research questions. The data collated from the respondents were presented in the tables presented above. It is from the data that the research questions were provided with corresponding answers in relation to the theory and literature explored in this

study. The findings of the study were discussed and presented in line with the research objectives.

Research Objective I: To ascertain the level of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency's utilisation of participatory communication in the process of executing projects in benefitting communities across the state.

Research Question 1 is vital towards gauging the level of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency Utilization of participatory development approach in executing sustainable development projects in the state. The respondents' responses in gauging the effectiveness of the agency's involvement of beneficiaries in the process of projects and programmes implementation in the benefitting communities. They rated the level of PLASCSDA's Utilization of participatory in the process of executing projects in their communities as "Very High Extent" and "High" respectively.

The findings further indicated that members of the benefitting communities were active participants in the process of executing projects in communities by the PLASCSDA; starting from the identification of felt needs, projects design and implementation as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the projects executed in their communities which empowered them to own and sustain the projects using their energies and resources for their benefits.

Research Objective II: To assess the extent of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency efficacy in promoting community development in the state.

On the effectiveness of Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency's role in promoting community development in the state, the data presented above, shows that majority of the respondents rated the role of PLASCSDA in promoting development in their respective communities as very effective. This indicates that the many communities in the state have been transformed due to the projects executed in communities in collaboration with the PLASCSDA and members of the benefitting communities.

Research Objective III: To determine the level of sustainability of projects executed by the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency in some communities within the state.

From the data presented above shows that the respondents rated the level of sustainability of the project executed in their communities by the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency as “Highly”, “High” and “Fair” respectively. The findings further revealed that sustainability of the projects in various communities in the state are guaranteed because members of the communities have invented measures aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the projects executed in their communities. One of the measures is the introduction of service charged fee to enable the monitoring, evaluation and maintenance committee which comprises of selected members of the benefitting communities and staff of the agency set-up in each of the benefitting communities with the sole mandate of ensuring effective maintenance of the projects executed in the benefitting communities across the state.

Conclusion

There are overwhelming evidences that the Plateau State Community and Social Development Agency (PLSCSDA) set-up by Plateau state government is not only promoting development at the grassroots but genuine and participatory sustainable community development in the 6 local government areas were selected to represent the state. This is possible as a result of stakeholders’ involvement in all the stages of the projects and entrusting the execution process in the hands of stakeholders while the CSDA merely guides the process. Participatory development emerged as top-bottom development paradigm where the development agency and partners imposed projects on communities without seeking for the consent and buy-in of the beneficiaries which is why some developing countries are still backwardness. The adaptation of bottom-top development approach by the Plateau state government which led to the establishment of CSDAs in the states has exposed communities to the practice of participatory development approach that empowered communities to decide the kind of intervention in their communities even without them funding the projects.

Recommendations

This study recommended the following:

- a) The concept of participatory communication should be promoted in the development of any democratic society because of its potential in empowering the rural communities to take ownership of projects executed in their communities and ensuring the sustainability of community projects.
- b) States that are yet to establish CSDA should speedily set-up the agency to enable such states to access World Bank's funding of the agency for the purpose of promoting people's driven community development.
- c) In view of the importance of participatory development or bottom-top development approach, states government should ensure regular payment of counterpart funding to World Bank for the states to continually access World Bank's funding of CSDAs in order to continue to promote community development.
- d) CSDA should be truly participatory in a manner that communities and the CSDA will work together in partnership for the purpose of entrenching community sustainable development.

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