International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research 12(1):66-76, Jan.-Mar., 2024

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Poverty Alleviation Programme And Community Development In Nigeria: A Study Of Implementation Of SEEFOR Project In Rivers State, 2013 – 2020

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated poverty alleviation programme and community development with a focus on the implementation of SEEFOR project in Rivers State from 2013 – 2020. The paper examined the relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and community development, determined the impact of youth employment on community development, interrogated the effect of skill acquisition on community development and ascertained the constraints that bedevilled state employment and expenditure for results in poverty alleviation programmes in community development. The systems theory and the theory of structural functionalism were adopted as the theoretical framework. The study adopted the descriptive research design in data collection and analysis. Findings revealed among others that there exists a positive relationship between poverty alleviation programmes and community development. However, this relationship has been fraught with substandard project, sectional interest over public interest and lack of sustainability. There is tremendous impact of youth employment programme on community development but some of the skill acquisition programme such as welding and fabrication, computing, plumbing and tiling, live-stock farming, electrical installation and carpentry/woodwork do not address the requirements of the programme. The study recommended among others that the programme should continue to execute its projects on public works, provide social infrastructures, enhance public financial management, build capacity and create assess to socio-economic services to consolidate on community development. Also, state employment and expenditure for results should focus on young people's abilities, potential for development, and increasingly good behaviours rather than their flaws without which community development would be a mirage.
Keywords: Poverty, Alleviation, Programme, Community, Development, SEEFOR

INTRODUCTION

Community development implies the provision of basic amenities such as roads, electricity, pipe borne water, health care facilities, schools including human capacity building and other necessities of life pertaining to man's general well-being. It has been ascertained that Nigeria inclusive Rivers State is blessed with abundance of natural resources and this list of natural resources is so enormous that every household member should have a convenient source of livelihood. Unfortunately, Nigeria is deeply rooted in wide spread corruption leading to an unimaginable poverty line. Ushie, Bassey & Agba (2009) claimed that the wave of poverty, economic backwardness, dearth of infrastructure, health challenges, unemployment, and natural disaster in rural and urban areas are currently some of the most serious problems in the world. They stressed that over 1.5 billion people of the world's population live below the

poverty line of one dollar per day; out of which 250 million people are from Sub-Saharan African. Meanwhile, most recent reports of the National Bureau of Statistics (2022) show that 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor. The report further revealed that 65% of the poor (86 million people) live in the North, while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the South whereas 4.40 million people are multidimensionally poor in Rivers State. Indicators used for analysis are security shock, underemployment, unemployment, assets, cooking fuel, housing materials, sanitation, water reliability, water, school lag, food insecurity, timely healthcare, school attendance, years of schooling and nutrition.

Ingawa (2001) opined that poverty is rated with lack of sustainable income, education, healthcare, security, etc which are basic necessities of lives. Successive administrations have initiated several poverty alleviation schemes such as Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Family Support Programme (FSP), Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), KEKE-NAPEP, NPOWER, etc to at least bridge the gaps between rich and the poor and to enhance community development yet it seems to be a common phenomenon in a unique circumstance or dilemma. The guaranty that SEEFOR would remedy the ugly-slapping poverty-stricken nature of the people in Rivers State in the midst of these policy failure has always been in doubt. It's objectives which are to enhance employment, skill acquisition, access to socio-economic services and improving the public expenditure management systems in community development process in the state are also not immune from excessive politicization and poor coordination of community development projects. Often times, its employment initiative was highjacked, and most times, regarded as a bonus for "area boys" loyal to politicians and community leaders while work processes were not adequately implemented for reasons of inexperience managers, excessive political influence, and community interest. Community development projects suffer the brunt of these reckless attitudes. This has made mess of the fight against poverty especially in the rural communities. It is in this light that this paper investigates poverty alleviation and community development in Nigeria with a focus on State Employment and Expenditure for Results (SEEFOR) project in Rivers State, 2013-2020.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Systems Theory

The general systems theory was propounded and first applied in biological sciences by Ludwig von Bertallanfy in 1930 to analyse the workings and functioning of the human body (Ugben & Egobueze, 2021). The scholars stressed that the theory was also adopted by Easton (1965) to analysed political systems. They noted that Easton considers the political system in terms of an input-output model but his main focus was on internal behaviour of the political system and its relationship with the environment. According to Ake (1996), systems theory in social science is descriptive in nature and attempts to highlight factors that are responsible for regulating and maintaining the system, while at same time focusing on the changes which take place within the system.

In this context therefore, SEEFOR acting as individual institution seeks to give voice to facilitate their transition from their state of underdevelopment to relative improvement. At the group level, SEEFOR was created as an institution of World Bank or non-governmental agency, through which its empowerment and development strategies is to have a better control over the community environment thereby enhancing desired and social progress. Thus, SEEFOR's activities in Nigeria communities are coordinated by government officials in collaboration with foreign bodies who seek to guide and help communities to achieve the translation of SEEFOR theoretical prescriptions into concrete practical realities. The systems approach pointed out certain issues affecting the environment due to unemployment amongst indigent youth and citizen of the state call for certain mechanizing like engaging the youth into meaningful activities to enhance productivities, providing avenue for social services to thrive, improving the financial management system to guarantee continuity of service delivery and create a reasonable accepted level of wealth irrespective of race, section, gender, political affiliation, etc. Therefore, the system theory presents empowerment as a process of transacting from a state of irrelevance to a state of relative control over

one's destiny, empowerment is therefore a transition from a passive situation where a powerless individual that had becomes worthless, indulged and self-blame, indifferent and alienated from the environment changes to a more active situation of control. On a face value, SEEFOR's policy appears to be a direct response to the immediate problems of the environment given its enunciated objectives. Thus, in the empowerment process such as contained in the strategies of SEEFOR, the beneficiaries are expected to learn and take on socially valuable roles such as participating in rural appraisal for prioritizing community interests, exercise of social skills and exertion of interpersonal influence to take responsibility and to demonstrate efficiency in service delivery. The abilities to exert some forms of poverty reduction measures to enhance socio-economic advancement and financial prudence which SEEFOR seeks to introduce to beneficiaries' communities of its programmes will greatly contribute to the joint goals of empowering the individuals while also acting as agents of community development.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Poverty

Poverty, like most terms is not given a one for all definition, that is to say that there is no universally accepted definition of poverty, therefore making the concept of poverty elusive. Poverty is widely accepted as a global problem. According to Central Bank of Nigeria (1999) in Alfa, Otaida and Audu (2014), poverty is a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of foods, clothing, and shelter; is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment, skills, assets and self-esteem, and has limited access to social and economic agriculture such as education, health care, potable water, sanitation and consequently has limited chance of advancing his or her welfare to the limit of his or her capabilities. According to Kankwanda in Barnes (2010) views poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon influenced by a wide range of factors, these include poor people with lack of access to income earning and productive activities and to essential basic amenities. Poverty according to Taiwo and Agwu (2016) defines poverty as the lack and the inability of persons to get minimum standard of living and be respected and recognized in the society. The implication of this is that the inability to provide for the family could make one to do anything to keep his family going. From the foregoing definitions, poverty can simply be defined as the inability to provide for the basic necessity of life, a drive for increased crime. A closer observation reveals that those involved in the various heinous crime in the state are people without any form of job or skill who fend for themselves, family and siblings who are no longer working either as a result of ill health or aged to take care of themselves. It is observed that poverty and unemployment give room to social ills by increasing social tensions that have eroded the fabric that held the society together.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty alleviation is one of the most difficult challenges facing any third world countries where, on the average, majority of population are still living in abject poverty. The high incidence of poverty in the country has made poverty alleviation strategies important policy options over the years with varying result. Eleagu (2013) affirmed that poverty alleviation as programmes aimed at improving the living standard. Also, Baghebo and Emmanuel (2015) view poverty alleviation as programmes in Nigeria which the objective is to revamp and rebrand the economy. According to Reutlinger cited in Banjo (2019) defines poverty alleviation as the set of purposive acts and processes taken by the government both state and globally to look into the problems of poverty. Banjo (2019) conceptualized poverty alleviation as the efforts made by people to provide the basic necessities of life to his family. In the view of Ogundikpe, alleviation strategies will be a success when given proper attention to address issues, identify the measures to be adopted and look at it properly for who will benefit from it. Osmond (2015) views poverty alleviation programmes as domestic investment that will boost economic growth and development such as rule of law, infrastructure and education.

Aliyu and Dansabo (2017) observe that Nigeria does not need any new policy on development and poverty alleviation programmes. All it needs s to show seriousness in the implementation of existing policies to look into Nigerian poverty and fight against weak governance in all its ramifications. Also,

Chukwuemaka cited in Aliyu and Dansabo also supported the view of Aliyu and Dansabo that the failure of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria is due to poor implementation, incompatibility of policy goals, bad governance, discipline, lack of evaluation monitory policies, and inadequate finding. Khalid in Aliyu and Dansabo (2019) argued that the responsibility of various administrations to reduce poverty have been ad hoc and uncoordinated. To buttress his point, he outlined some major factors hindering the success of government effort in the alleviation of poverty, which are poor coordination, the absence of comprehensive policy framework, ineffective targeting of the poor leading to leakage of benefits to unintended beneficiaries, overlapping of functions which led to institutional rivalry and conflicts, etc. Drew from above, SEEFOR is indeed an international policy instrument for the reduction of poverty and sensitizing community development in the country. The aim of the alleviation programme is on wealth creation, creation of employment, reduction of poverty and the general orientation of values of the programme on community and/or rural development.

Development

Development as a concept has no single and universally accepted definition. That is why Silas Liman in Idakwoji (2015) observed that the concept of development is heavily value loaded, and that its operational definition is a matter of what the writer cherishes as the goal or objective of the economy. However, the conception of Silas Liman has been criticized on the grounds that there are many ways to look at an issue without necessarily making it value-loaded. The concept is viewed from the holistic angle as a complex and multi-dimensional or many side process which is made up of several related aspects including the social, economic, political, cultural, administrative, philosophical and religion aspect of society or community. Walter Rodney (1969) observed that development is a many-sided process, which, at the level of individual implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. Since human beings do not live in isolation, but in groups, Rodney further added that development means freedom, responsibility, skill etc have real meaning only of the relationships of man in society. At the level of social groups, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships.

According to Dudley Seers, development addresses the three questions of what has been happening to poverty? what has been happening to inequality? and what is the situation of unemployment? He then concluded that if all these three declined from high level to low level to low level, one can say that such a country or community is experiencing development, but if one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all the three have, then it would be strange to call the result development, even if per capita income is doubled. Putting all the definitions of development together, it can be rightly asserted that development is both a physical process as well as a state of the mind while we are thinking of physical transformation, it equally very vital to think of the transformation of the state of the mind in the community or society. It is only when this is done that the desired physical development can take place. This is so because all people. No matter how beautiful a programme of development might be, if the state of the minds of the people is not transformed to agree with such programme, the attainment of the goal of development will become a mirage.

Community Development

It appears that there is no consensus on the meaning and goals of community development. Hence, the diversity of definitions. Ekong in Anikeze (2014) sees community development as any action in a locality by any agency with the primary intention of bringing some benefits to such locality. Eze (1999) defined community development as efforts provided for advancement of communities, hesitated that the major emphasis of the concept was upon those activities which aim at prorating the improvement of the basic condition of the community's non material need. Anikeze (2014) posited that community development as a process of social action in which people took action to meet those needs with maximum reliance on their own initiative and resources, supplemented with assistance in any government and non-governmental organization. Letam (2021) noted that community development is a process. Arthur defines it as a process by which people in an area choose to think as a community, go about analysing a situation, determining its needs and unfulfilled opportunities, deciding what can and should be done to improve the

situation, and then move in the direction of achievement of the agreed upon goals and objectives. Our understanding revealed that community development is either a movement, process or a programme. This perception tends to highlight, recognise and promote the dominant or central role of external bodies, donors and agencies in community development activities. The last definition by UN appears to be more relevant to the exigency of the Nigerian environment. This calls for the realisation on the part communities that they have to make some efforts to uplift their living conditions.

State Employment and Expenditure for Results (SEEFOR) in Rivers State

The Federal Government of Nigeria implemented the State Employment and Expenditure for Results (SEEFOR) Project in four States. In Rivers State, the Project is executed under the Rivers State employment and Expenditure for Results (RIVERS SEEFOR) supervised by the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning. The overall objective of the project is to ensure employment generation through small public works and access to socio-economic services while improving the Public Financial Management system of participating States. This is tailored towards promoting accountability and transparency in the utilization of public finances, which in turn translates into employment opportunities for the youths. In order to ensure the adequate management of environmental and social impacts for the proposed public works activities of road maintenance, this Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) has been prepared for the specific roads of interventions.

Description of Activities

The activity in the intervention areas in all the corridors of 55 Roads Maintenance is mainly for civic works aspect of the public works, which involve the following:

- Identified potholes will be cut to shape with cutter machine and cut area is reinforced. The area will be filled with Portland cement concrete (PCC). Drainages will be desilted, removing and replacing concrete cover slab during de-silting activity and spoil disposed to approve dumpsite.
- Another activity expected to be undertaken is reconstruction of collapsed drainage wall using the same materials and where pocket of holes exists, patch with concrete.
- Weeding and uprooting of shrubs and grasses from and outside the road shoulder will also take place in most of the intervention areas. The weeded and uprooted shrubs and grasses will be disposed of already existing dumpsite including scrap, sand/soil heaps to furnished pavement surface.
- Bullets 1 – 3 will be carried out by workers/beneficiaries with their PPE.
- These activities criss-cross most of the 55 Lots

Institutional and Legal Framework for Environmental Management: The World Bank has Environmental and Social Safeguard Policies to reduce or eliminate the adverse effects of development projects, and improve decision making. Of these Safeguard policies, the intervention work at the site triggers Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01). There are similarities between the World Bank Safeguards Policies and the EIA Act of Nigeria. However, in the event of dissonance between World Bank Safeguards Policies and the EIA Act and or any other extant laws in Nigeria, the World Bank Safeguards Policies shall supersede.

Funding of SEEFOR Projects in Rivers State

World Bank and other financing bodies such as the EU finance projects carried out by member states, corporate bodies and even not-for-profit organizations. SEEFOR project with the aim to enhance youth employment and ameliorate social conditions and bring development in certain communities was financed by several actors. While the Federal Government received credit from the International Development Association (IDA) and grants from the European Union (EU) towards the cost of implementing the State Employment and Expenditure for Results (SEEFOR) Project, the local government provides the required manpower and other menial materials needed for project execution. To this extent, SEEFOR projects were carried out in four selected states in the Niger-Delta valued at 280 million dollars (N102 billion)

while it provided 65% of the fund, the EU provided 35% of the fund to ensure completion of SEEFOR projects in the region. Out of which, Rivers State Government is the biggest beneficiary of the project with an allocation of 80 million dollars for the execution of SEEFOR projects in various communities in the 23 local government areas of Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Impact of SEEFOR youth employment programme on community development: Findings revealed that there is a relationship between SEEFOR youth empowerment programme and community development. 175 of the respondents representing 97.2% and 145 representing 80.6% responded positively to the fact youth empowerment affects community development and that the level of literacy of the youths also affects community improvement, respectively. This is consistent with the claims made by Salami (2013) that the literacy rate is a key factor in the explanation of national progress. Secondly, 90% of the respondents affirmed that SEEFOR should be concerned with the empowerment of the youths and ensure that granting low-interest loans to youths is an effective way to empower them. Ugiagbe (2011) opined that giving the youths access to community resources enhances their better performance in the activities aimed at the growth of the community. It was reported that about one hundred business organizations folded up in Nigeria due to unfriendly nature of the environment (Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie, 2017). Data gathered from the second hypothesis revealed that there was a significant relationship between youth unemployment and their involvement in criminal activities. Obviously, an interviewee responded that:

> the lingering unemployment among the youths is fast tearing the fabric of society, thereby turning the youths who should have been agents of development into armed robbery so as to earn a living. The country's spiralling youth unemployment can be said to have significantly contributed to the dramatic rise in criminal activities in the state such as armed robbery, civil unrest, terror threats, abductions and kidnapping of persons irrespective of status or age. This negative development has not only led to pervasive poverty among the population, but also raised serious security concerns as lack of jobs had turned the idle mind of the youth 's into the devil's workshop (N. Worlu, personal communication, July 28, 2023).

Another respondent revealed that:

> without the active participation of the youths, the community cannot develop. The youths need to be at the helm of affairs to positively influence community development. Utilizing one's individual and communal strengths will result in a direct process of change. However, youths are not responsible enough to make a positive change in the community and that the youths are inexperienced and cannot promote community development (C. Tamuno, personal communication, July 25, 2023).

Effect of SEEFOR skill acquisition programme on community development: This objective investigated the impact of vocational skills acquisition programmes of SEEFOR in Rivers State. Findings show that mechanic works, bricklaying/building works, welding/fabrication, electrical/installation, future/wood works, and others showed that vocational skills acquisition programmes are available and practiced in the state by SEEFOR. This is in agreement with Uranta, who reported that skills acquisition training programs as an adult education programme are available in the region and that they are designed to impart various skills on participants to meet their immediate needs such as job, self-reliance and to curb restiveness among youths. On the impacts of vocational skills acquisition programmes, findings from the study show that self-independent, socio-economic development, ethics and values, sustainable development, peaceful co-existence and good human/public relations are the impact of vocational skills acquisition programmes in Rivers State. This finding is consistent with that of Ajibola and Jumoke who

reported that technical and vocational skills are needed for enterprise productivity and profitability, `as well as for national productivity, individual prosperity and wealth creation.

Also, the study revealed that SEEFOR has succeeded to supply necessary inputs that has improve people's livelihood, productivity and increase their level of income. These inputs are in form of fertilizers, farming machines, seeds, training programmes, skill acquisition programmes, credit facilities and others. According to Victory (2023), the net poverty eradication becomes minus ninety thousand people, which means an additional ninety thousand are pushed down to poverty level. The poverty eradication we are currently adopting is an imitated one. It is characterized in the case of Nigeria by low productivity, a high level of import, high level of unemployment, and simple stagnation. In this environment, even giving free fertilizer to farmers can yield better result, than the current over celebrated programmes. However, some of the respondents revealed that poor interest among youths, poor financial background, lack of government funding, quests for white collar jobs, restiveness among youths, cultism, lack of human/public relations, unemployment, poor knowledge of technology and lack of visionary leaders among others, are the challenges militating against vocational skills acquisition programmes in the state.

Constraints encountered by SEEFOR in poverty alleviation programme on community development:

One major challenge facing the implementation of World Bank-SEEFOR intervention in Rivers State is the use of substandard materials by greedy and unqualified contractors especially in the construction of concrete walk-ways. As a result of the substandard materials used by some contractors, the concrete roads hardly last. The procurement of substandard materials used in construction of micro projects like roads, drainages, health centres, town halls etc. clearly violate World Bank procurement standard.

Another serious threat to the implementation of World Bank projects in Rivers State is that of security. In line with the above, a respondent revealed that:

> The issues or constraints encounter by SEEFOR in community development is deeply rooted in the implementation process that is faulty, affected by challenges such as bureaucratic bottlenecks, capacity challenges, political interference, and obtaining varied and misaligned approvals processes between local authorities and development partners (T. Joshua, personal communication, March 14, 2023)

Corroborating the above view, Federal Government (2022) through the then Minister of Finance, Budget and Nation Planning, Zainab Ahmed, stressed that one of the critical sources of funds for the execution of key projects in Nigeria is through donor financing, especially, from multilateral bodies such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank while admitting the funding gap said that when borrowed funds were not properly utilised, growth was impaired and economic development distorted. Similarly, James, Emmanuel and Akintola (2016) noted that World Banks projects, although considered necessary for 'economic growth' in a developing country like Nigeria, the implementation of these projects do not add much economic values to the country. Inimical condition usually attached to loans from World Bank is the insistence that the recipient countries must not only pay for consultancy which often takes half of the loans, but also purchase the materials that would be used to execute the projects from the west, notably the major financial contributors to the institution. Also, the recipient states spend huge part of the loan on importation of materials which otherwise could be sourced or produced locally. The scholars further revealed that most of the materials imported to execute SEEFOR's project usually find their way back to the local market where they are being hawked on the streets and in traffic for a token. Some Nigerians use the opportunity of these projects to make themselves rich. World Bank projects mostly do not achieve their objectives because of corruption and the conditionalities attached to loans and grants.

Synopsis of SEEFOR Programme in Community Development in Rivers State

From our interaction with the focal person, Carol Matthew of the Rivers State Ministry of Information, it is revealed that the need for poverty alleviation through youth employment and access to socio-economic services formed the bases for the formation of the State Employment and Expenditure for Results

(SEEFOR) Project, in order to consolidate on the gains of the amnesty programme of the Federal government and ensure that youths do not fall back to social vices. The objective is to enhance opportunities for employment and access to socio-economic services whilst improving the public financial management systems in the four Niger Delta participating State of Bayelsa, Delta, Edo and Rivers.

SEEFOR has two main components: Component A: Youth employment and access to socio-economic services and Component B: Public Financial Management (PFM) Reforms. Since implementation commenced in Rivers State, the project has traversed the nooks and crannies of the state and transformed lives of several youths, women and communities at large.

Reviewing the activities of the multifaceted project across its sub-components: Public Works, Technical, Vocational and Agricultural Training (TVAT), Community Driven Development-Economic and Community Driven Development-Social as well as its Public Financial Management Component, beneficiaries bared their minds on the activities of the Project. Under the Public Works Sub-Component, which entail executing small road maintenance and waste management projects, the State Project Coordinator, Mr Kelcious Amos said it has surpassed its target of executing 224 projects and engaging 10,845 beneficiaries to executing 497 projects and engaging 21,770 beneficiaries. Some beneficiaries and resident of communities visited expressed their gratitude: at Okwutake Community in Degema LGA where Utie-Iwula Road was maintained, a resident Mrs Elizabeth Brown said "the road was very bad that people could not even use it during rainy season, people could not go through the road to the Waterside, but after SEEFOR's intervention, the road is now very assessable." At Apostolic Church Road, in Eleme one of the beneficiaries, Miss Christy Ogbaji said the project has given her engineering knowledge that she can apply anywhere. At Lawson's Compound/Health Centre Road where a mini bridge was constructed to replace the Old wooden bridge that was there, the community members thanked the project for the bridge that has eased transportation of sick people and pregnant women in and out of the health centre. They also said the bridge is connecting them to nearby communities but called for more projects in the community.

Speaking on the TVAT sub-component, the State Project Coordinator said the project had an initial target of training 5,436 youths but 6,134 youths have benefited from this sub-component and some have received starter packs. He explained further that SEEFOR has intervened in four technical schools that include Government Technical College (GTC) Ahoada, Ele-Ogu, Port Harcourt and Tombia. Others are Government Craft Development Centre, Port Harcourt, School-to Land Authority, Rumudomaya, Women Development Centre Taabaa, Ken Saro-Wiwa Polytechnic, Bori and Capt. Elechi Amadi Polytechnics, Rumuola. He explained further that under Ken Saro-Wiwa and Elechi Amadi Polytechnics youths were trained in the following short-term skills; air-conditioning and refrigeration maintenance, carpentry/wood work technician, computer and phone repair/maintenance, electrical installation technician, block laying, concreting and iron mongery, automobile technology, electronics installation technician/maintenance, plumbing/tiling technician, and welding and fabrication. SEEFOR in collaboration with some non-state actors also trained youths in Fashion Designing, welding and fabrication, Carpentry/wood work, livestock farming, catering and hotel management. In addition to the above, the project engaged volunteer teachers to augment the effort of the State government in technical schools.

The Community Driven Development (CDD) sub-component has provided both economic and social succour to rural dwellers. A review of the Community Driven Development-Social (CDD-S) that was designed to provide access to social infrastructure in rural communities based on needs assessment and project selection, reveal that the project has intervened in 47 communities and implemented 94 micro projects across 17 LGAs. Assessing the impact of the project in communities showed a visibly elated people who applauded SEEFOR for infrastructural development micro project provided for them. At Ewika in Eleme where a Civic Centre and Borehole was constructed, the traditional ruler, Chief Jacob Mpka said the project was the first of its kind in the history of the Community. He explained that since the inception of the community they have been without potable water, that the construction of borehole by SEEFOR Project was a big relief to the entire Egbere Ewika Community and its environs. The Chief

further said the Civic Centre is now a source of social gathering for the people. Similarly, in Igwuruta where 240 km walk way was constructed; Hon Ken Amaewhule who spoke on behalf of the community thanked SEEFOR for the road, that has boosted both their individual and commercial activities. At Kalaibiama Community in Bonny LGA, members of the community thanked the project for the electrification of the community which had hitherto being in darkness.

The CDD-E sub-component is created to provide grant for the implementation of agricultural micro project in rural communities thereby increasing their income base. SEEFOR Project is collaborating with FADAMA III to implement this sub-component. So far, 712 cooperatives have benefitted from this sub-component across 49 communities. Members of some communities who spoke on behalf of their communities were unanimous in their accolade for the project. At Somiari Tere-Ama Community in Port Harcourt LGA where a poultry and lives stock cluster farm was implemented as well as public convenience. Mrs Dorathy Somiari thanked the project for given the community opportunity to raise their income base as some youths in the community were employed to work on the farm in addition to the proceeds from the farm which is sold periodically. A representative of the community Mr Emmanuel Somiari said by siting the public convenience there, several causalities have been saved, noting that before SEEFOR's intervention, aged people usually fall down while trying to climb the wooden bridge to toilet. At Umuagwu in Omuma LGA where market stalls, public convenience and water micro projects were sited, members of the community thanked SEEFOR/FADAMA, adding that it has improved their businesses, social and individual lives as people now have markets stalls to sell their goods without fear of rain and sun, while the search for portable water has been eliminated. Speaking on behalf of Ido SEEFOR/FADAMA Community Association in Asari-Toru, Mr Sagbe Endure thanked the project for the Cluster farm sited in the community and the borehole water project that has replaced the well water that was the only source of drinking water in the community.

Giving an overview of the assessment of the performance of SEEFOR Project in the State, the National Project Coordinator Dr Greg Onu said "Rivers SEEFOR has surpassed its targets in most indicators, some by 200%, and some by 250%". He applauded Rivers Project Team for the success recorded and ensuring that the project objective is achieved. The programme was declared closed in September 2020.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed that skill programmes in mechanic works, bricklaying/building works, welding/fabrication, electrical/installation, future/wood works, amongst others also enhance community development while poor supervision of projects, use of inferior materials, hijack of opportunities by cronies, influence in employment and identification of unprioritized project, poor interest among youths, poor financial background, lack of government funding, quests for white collar jobs, restiveness among youths, cultism, lack of human/public relations, unemployment, poor knowledge of technology and lack of visionary leaders however do not engender community development in Rivers State. Based on our findings, the study recommends among others that SEEFOR should focus on young people's abilities, potential for development, and increasingly good behaviours rather than their flaws. The youths must be adequately trained, shape their orientation to understand their usefulness in community development initiatives. Also, the state and local government must constantly collaborate with SEEFOR to expand the scope of skill acquisition programmes and ensure that only interested individuals irrespective of their social status should be given the opportunity to participate in the programme.

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