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Community Participation in Developmental Effort of Government in rural communities of Ilaje Local Government area, Ondo State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

All developmental efforts have a vision to bring about sustainable development to the community for which it was intended. Developmental efforts however have a slim chance of success if the complex situation of the beneficiary community is not understood. It is believed that the community itself is in the best position to understand every peculiarity associated with it. It is therefore inadequate for developmental effort not to involve the community in all developmental processes. This study examines community participation and involvement in developmental efforts of government in rural communities of Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State. The qualitative data used for the study was collected using structured questionnaire, phone calls and interviews. Four communities from the oil producing region were studied with a total of 192 participants from the communities. The findings revealed that the community members are significantly involved at the execution stage (96.9%) as they are been used for labour. The level of community involvement at the needs assessment (17.7%) and initiation stages (33.9%) were however very low. low and also that sharing of project benefit is particularly low. The study also revealed that the community was significantly involved in the aspect of contributing money for maintenance (59.3%) and contributing labour (90.6%) whereas in the aspect of assuming control (1.0%), involvement is almost inexistent. Findings further revealed that community participation is influenced by age (p value=0.084), gender (p value=0.151) and educational attainment (p value=0.060). The study moreover made recommendations which include, regular conduct of town hall meetings with community delegates and agencies' staff, involving the community more during needs assessment and initiation stages among others.

Introduction

The Ondo state oil producing communities are located along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. The area boasts of over 180km long shoreline thereby making it the longest coastline in Nigeria. Oil exploration and production began here in the 1960s. It was then initiated by Gulf Oil Company. However, construction began in the area in 1977. The initial locations of the exploration exercise here were Awoye, Ojumole, Odofado, Molutehin and Oba-nla. By 2005, there were six Oil companies exploring at the region. These were Chevron-Texaco Nigeria Limited, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Cronicle, Express Oil, Consolidated Oil and Allied Energy.

The oil producing areas of the region was neglected after the farmsteads were displaced. The environment was devastated as a result of oil exploration and exploitation which led to the dislocation of people's productive bases. The oil region according to Ikein (1990) suffer more from the impact of oil due to existing economic and social problems. This was made worst by the activities of the oil industries. The near absence of basic amenities in communities in this region as a result of the neglect has resulted to worsened socioeconomic situation of the inhabitants. Even when they manage to get surplus of farm products to sell, they had no accessible roads for adequate marketing of the produce (Ajugwo, 2013).

In the quest to solve the lingering developmental problems in the Niger Delta region The Nigerian government established intervention agencies like the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to plan and implement the programmes needed for the development of the Niger Delta Region (Babajide, 2004). The Ondo State Oil Producing Area Development Commission (OSOPADEC) created by the state government to aid the developmental process in the area. The Ministry of the Niger Delta which is the latest effort by the government to monitor activities of developmental agencies in the region. However the two popular developmental agencies in the region is NDDC and OSOPADEC.

Despite the huge amount budgeted and allocated yearly by both the Federal Government of Nigeria and Ondo State government, these interventionist agencies have not been able to perform the expected miracle over the years of establishment. This assertion has in reality threatened the relevance of the Agencies and there have been suggestions for reorganizing and redefining their missions and visions as to reposition them to be more impactful. The reasons for the underperformance of the agencies have in several researches been linked to a number of inhibitory factors. Most if not all of this factors have in other researches been linked to lack of community participation and involvement.

It is on this note that the paper examines the extent of community involvement in participation and developmental effort of government in the Communities of Ilaje Local Government of Ondo State Nigeria.

Review of Literatures

The Meaning of a Community

The term, community, has many interpretations. In the social science, community generally refers to a group that has some sense of shared identity and belonging, often within a geographic and political context, where they satisfy many of their needs (Schaefer, 2004). Communities have common values, tradition interests, institutions and experiences. They also have social networks and systems within and beyond boundaries such as mutual help, traditional and social safety nets, which build support and cooperation. In this sense, community evokes the ideal of a homogeneous social group with shared interest. Members worked together harmoniously for the common good of all (Cornwall, 2006).

Generally, communities vary substantially in the degree to which their members feel connected and share a common identity. We may have urban community and within it are other communities. In this manner, even rural communities do have other smaller communities within them. Since communities are complex and dynamic, Community Development Committees are often tailored to a given situation. Conditions both within and outside the community such as existing socio political and economic problem that demand public support, attention and knowledge about development issues, affect a community readiness to act.

Community Participation

According to a German development agency, participation is a ‘‘co determination and power sharing which entails involvement in development processes.’’ It entails social development in which people as subjects in their own environment seek out ways to meet their collective needs and expectations and to overcome their common problems. As stated by Fung (2006)

Stretching across the national development plan of Nigeria, the fundamental thrust of infrastructure development have been rise in the standard of living, favourable changes in the way of life of the people concerned and their needs. This indeed, supposed to have started with providing basic needs of the people, including the capacity to make their own decisions, and participating in decisions that affect their lives. In other word, developmental services supposed to have institutions and individuals through whom it can function, have goals that are adjusted as implementation proceeds, in line with experience and the changing conceptions of the groups and sponsors concerned (Leye 1993). Basically, the functionality is to provide suitable development in the study area.

Often time development programme are carried out on behalf of the people by the government institutions believing that it knows everything concerning community population and consider the community population not yet ripe to participate in the management of their own affairs. The provision of infrastructure are so often the responsibility of the different agencies or ministries: some provided by local government; state government; national (federal) government; International oil companies; Faith base organization; Nongovernmental organizations. Community population is not taken into consideration the existence of its peculiar problem and commitment of the appropriate institutions to effective developmental services.

The provision of communities' participation to the developmental efforts of government help realized quick improvement in the communities' development, it is more important to know the current need/demand of the communities' inhabitants by making the inhabitants to choose their own path of development in the communities and the path of activities in which they can participate.

Developmentalefforts of government in Ondo State

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was created by the federal government for economic empowerment. The mandate of the commission include the formulation of policies and guidelines for the development of the region, Conception, planning and implementation, in accordance with set rules and regulations, of projects and programmes for sustainable development of the Niger Delta area in the field of transportation including roads, jetties and waterways, health, employment, industrialization, agriculture and fisheries, housing and urban development, water supply, electricity and telecommunications.

The State government of Ondo with a vision to ease the development efforts in the region created the Ondo State Oil Producing Area Commission (OSOPADEC) to cater specifically for the people of the oil producing communities by providing basic infrastructure, projects and other activities that could alleviate the suffering of the people. The two local government that benefited from the creation of OSOPADEC are Ilaje Local Government and Ese-Odo Local government area as they are the only two oil producing local governments in the state.

OSOPADEC was created to achieve sustainable development of the oil producing areas of Ondo State through the receipt and exclusive administration of the 40% of the 13% oil derivation fund accruing to the Ondo State Government. The administrative structure of the Commission affords an indigene of the oil producing areas to be appointed as its full-time Executive Chairman, which created a lot of goodwill from the people.

The functions of the commission are to receive and administer exclusively, 40% of the 13% oil derivation fund accruing to Ondo State Government for the rehabilitation and development of oil producing areas in the state and other development projects as may be determined from time to time by the Commission; to liaise with the relevant Federal Government and State Government authorities on the control and effective methods of tackling the problems of coastal erosion, oil pollution and spillages in the State; to ensure fair and equitable distribution of development projects in the oil producing areas of the State.

Objectives

1. To examine the awareness of community inhabitants of government intervention efforts
2. To review the level of community involvement in government intervention
3. To examine the stages of community involvement in intervention projects

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between the socio economic and demographic characteristics of respondents and their involvement in government intervention projects.

Methodology

Ilaje LGA shares boundaries with Okitipupa Local Government Area in the north; the Atlantic Ocean in the south; Ijebu Waterside Local Government Area (in Ogun State) in the west and Delta state in the east. The area boasts of over 180km long shoreline thereby making it the longest coastline in Nigeria. The study area falls within latitudes 6° and 6° 30' north of the equator and longitudes 4° 45' and 5° 45' east of the Greenwich Meridian. The area is positioned within the equatorial evergreen swamp forest. Ilaje local government is made up of three major Kingdoms which are Ugbo, Mahin and Etikan Kingdom. While Ugbokigdom consists of the major oil producing communities others suffer the impact of the environmental degradation as a result of the oil exploitation activities. For the purpose of this study, 4 communities in Ugbo kingdom were chosen, they include Ugbonla, Ode-Ugbo, Ayetoro and Awoye. They were selected based on their relevance in the kingdom and the local government, their population and the numbers of government intervention programmes in the community. Instruments used for the study included phone calls, interviews, and structured questionnaires. The structured questionnaire was designed and administered to 50 participants in each community giving a total of 200 participants. However, only 192 useable questionnaires were used for analysis. The data collected were analysed using percentages and frequencies. Chi square analysis was used with the aid of Statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) to test the hypothesis.

Table 1, Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Class	Frequenc y	Percent
Age Group	15-24	28	14.8
	25-34	52	26.7
	35-44	47	24.8
	45-54	34	17.4
	55-64	16	8.5
	65 and above	15	7.9
	Total		192
Gender	Male	118	61.3
	Female	74	38.7
	Total	192	100.0
Marital Status	Single	35	19.1
	Married	151	79.7
	Widowed	4	0.8
	Separated	2	0.3
	Total	192	100
Educational Attainment	None	31	16.1
	Primary	44	22.8
	Secondary	92	47.9
	Tertiary	25	13.2
	Total	192	100
Income	Low	150	78.5
	Medium	29	15
	High	13	6.5
	Total	192	100

Table 1 contains information about the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the respondents. From the table it is seen that 14.8% representing 28 respondents were aged 15-24, 26.7% representing 52 respondents were aged 25-34, 24.8% (47 respondents) were aged 35-44, 17.4% of respondents (34 respondents) were aged 45-54, 8.5% (16 respondents) were aged 55-64 while 7.9% (15 respondents) were aged 65 and above. Majority of the respondents (61.3% representing 118 respondents) were male while 38.7% representing 74 respondents were female. Most of the respondents (79.7%) were married, 19.1% single, 0.8% widowed and 0.3% were separated. Majority of the respondents (47.9%) had secondary school education, 22.8% had primary school education, 16.1% had No education while the least percentage (13.2%) had tertiary education. This indicates that majority of the respondents have secondary level education. Jimoh and Olorunfemi, (2014) also obtained a similar result in their research on ‘two sides of development: projects and conflicts in oil producing area of Ondo State’. The income per month of the respondents were grouped into low income earners (N1000-N30, 000), medium (N30, 001-N60, 000) and high (N60, 001 and above). This grouping is based on the purchasing power of money in the study area. Most (78.5%) of the respondents were low income earners, 15% were medium income earners while 6.5% earned high. The income situation in the communities is low considering the economic situation of the country.

4.1 Awareness

Table 2 revealed the awareness of the respondents on government intervention and benefit.

Table 2: Awareness of intervention projects and benefits

s/n	Awareness parameters	frequency	Percentage
1	Aware of government intervention in the local government	188	97.9
2	Aware of government interventions in the community	176	91.7

3	Benefited from any government intervention	106	55.2
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Results from table 2 revealed that a total of 188 representing 97.9% of the respondents were aware of government interventions in the local government. Also, 91.7% were aware of government intervention programmes in their community while 55.2% have benefited from government intervention programmes. The results from table 2 imply that majority (97.9%) of the respondents are aware of the existence of government interventions in Ilaje local government, however not all of them (only 55.2%) have benefited from the intervention programmes.

4.2 Level of involvement of participants in projects

Table 3: Level of involvement of participants in projects

s/n	Project	Frequency	Percentage
1	Rehabilitation of roads	44	23.4
2	Construction/repair of footbridges	143	74.8
3	Construction of school blocks	83	42.9
4	Canalization of waterways	32	16.5
5	Skill acquisition programs	62	32.4
6	Construction of drainage system (gutter)	85	44.7
7	Construction of health centres	31	16.2
8	Construction of market blocks	100	52.7
9	Construction of boreholes	58	31.2
10	Construction of solar poles	22	11.4
11	Sand filling projects	8	4.3

Source: field survey 2018

The results in table 3 showed that 23.4% of the participants were involved in roads rehabilitation projects. Results from table 3 also showed that majority (74.8%) of the respondents were involved in footbridges construction and repair. The results further revealed that 42.9%, 16.5%, 32.4%, 44.7%, 16.5%, 52.7%, 31.2%, 11.4% and 4.3% of the respondents were involved in construction of school blocks, canalization of waterways, skill acquisition programs, construction of drainage system, construction of health centres, construction of market blocks, construction of boreholes, construction of solar poles and sand filling projects respectively. These results indicate that majority of the respondents participate in construction/ repair of footbridges while only few of them (4.3%) participate in sandfilling projects. This implies that intervention agencies involve community members more in footbridges projects.

4.3 Stages of involvement of community in projects

Table4: Stages of involvement of community in projects

s/n	Project type	N.A.	initiation	execution	maintenance
1	Rehabilitation of roads	3 (1.6)	45 (23.4)	67 (34.9)	4 (2.1)
2	Construction/repair of footbridges	34 (17.7)	65 (33.9)	186 (96.9)	178 (92.7)
3	Construction of school blocks	5 (2.6)	16 (8.3)	165 (85.9)	7 (3.6)
4	Canalization of waterways (dredging)	12 (6.3)	12 (6.2)	7 (3.6)	3 (1.6)
5	Skill acquisition programs	4 (2.1)	7 (3.6)	15 (7.8)	16 (8.3)
6	Construction of drainage system (gutter)	36 (18.8)	43 (22.4)	145(75.5)	168 (87.5)
7	Construction of health centres	2 (1.0)	23 (12.0)	117(61.0)	34 (17.7)
8	Construction of market blocks	1 (0.5)	9 (4.7)	144 (75)	38 (19.8)
9	Construction of boreholes	32 (16.7)	14 (7.3)	35 (18.2)	11 (5.7)
10	Construction of solar poles	3 (1.6)	21 (11.0)	13 (6.8)	15 (7.8)
11	Sand filling projects	14 (7.3)	4 (2.1)	11 (5.7)	12 (6.3)

NA= Needs Assessment; the values in parenthesis are percentages

The results in table 4 revealed that 18.8% representing 36 respondents was the highest reported for involvement of community members at the Needs assessment stage while the lowest is 0.5%. Also, 96.9% representing 186 respondents was highest for community involvement at the execution stage the lowest was 3.6%. Furthermore the results revealed 33.9% representing 65 respondents as the highest reported for community involvement at the initiation stage and the lowest was 2.1%. Moreover, the results revealed that the

larger population of respondents (92.7%) representing 178 respondents reported community involvement during the maintenance stage 1.6% was smallest.

The results in table 4 indicates that the highest level of community participation reported was 96.9% during the execution stage for construction of drainage system while the lowest is 0.5% during the Needs assessment stage for construction of market blocks.

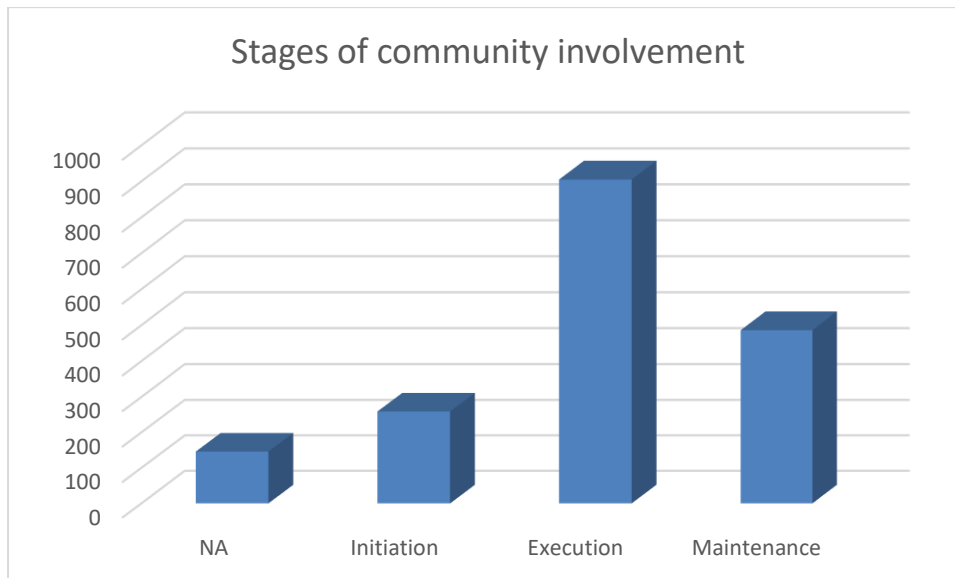


Figure 1 stages of community participation in intervention projects
 NA= Needs assessment

Figure 1 depicts the stages of community involvement in intervention projects in the study area. The figure revealed that the level of community participation during the needs assessment stage is very low followed by the initiation stage which is a bit higher. The level of involvement during the maintenance stage is considerably high but the highest level of community involvement is during the execution stage. This is because a large number of people within the community particularly youths are used as labour during execution. This most of the times is also to the advantage of the executors as they spend less using community members for labour compared to when they have to bring in labour force from elsewhere. Involving the community during needs assessment and initiation/planning stage is however most important for getting the best out of them. The low level of community involvement during the needs assessment and initiation/planning stage in the study area could be the reason for the high rate of unsuccessful government interventions in the area.

4.4 Aspects of community involvement in intervention projects: table 5 revealed the results obtained when respondents were asked the aspect where they particularly contribute to government intervention projects in their community

Table 5 Aspects of community involvement in intervention projects

s/n	Aspect	Frequency	Percentage
1	Joint planning	04	2.1
2	Contributing money during execution	17	8.9
2	Contributing money for maintenance	114	59.3
3	Delegation of authority	23	12.0
4	Consultation	63	32.8
5	Contributing labour/materials	174	90.6
6	Assuming control	2	1.0
7	Monitoring and evaluation	16	8.3
8	Providing security for projects	32	16.7

Source: field survey 2018

From table 5, it is seen that, 2.1% representing 4 respondents reported joint planning as an aspect where community is involved in projects. By jointly planning projects, people are able to draw out the

important specifics of the project including the period of execution, design, size, executors, materials, operators and locations that best fit the peculiarities of a community.

According to Paul (1987), involving the beneficiaries in the planning of intervention projects will go a long way in determining the success of the intervention as the beneficiaries will make considerable efforts to ensure its sustainability. The results from table 5 indicates that the intervention agencies in the study area rarely involved the community in planning of projects, this could be the reason for the high rate of abandoned, dilapidated and dysfunctional projects in the study area. Also, 8.9% of respondents representing 17 respondents reported that the community contribute money for any need during project execution. However, 59.3% representing 114 respondents reported that the community contribute money for project maintenance. According to a participant during a focus group discussion, this happens when the community inhabitants notice a dilapidating project particularly one which is a necessity to the community due to the prevalent neglect by the government. The community people generally come together and contribute money to fund the repair.

Furthermore, the results in table 5 revealed that only 12.0% representing 23 respondents highlighted that community people are delegated authority by being in position to oversee some aspects of projects implementation. From the words of a participant of one of the focus group discussions, most of the people overseeing the projects are from the cities. Delegating authority to community members can enhance their participation but may not be the best as some of them do not have the technical know-how to deliver the best of projects. Also, table 5 revealed that 32.8% representing 65 participants highlighted that consultations were made with community concerning projects. Consultations may be in the form of needs assessment, may also be for seeking community support, finding solutions to hindrances or to get details about the environment. To ensure the successful implementation of a project, adequate consultations should be made with the community members. Adesida and Okunola (2012) highlighted that the contributions of beneficiaries to a project success should not be made insignificant if a project is to be sustainable.

Majority of the respondents (90.6%) however reported that the community members contribute labour/ materials towards intervention projects. This is a common practice of project executors in the study area as they delegate jobs like mixing concrete, welding jobs and some electrical works to community members. As good as this practice is especially in generating income for community members it does not contribute significantly to the success/sustainability of the project as they can only do whatever they are directed to do. Also, similar to delegation authority, only 1.0% reported that community member assumed control over project processes. Only 8.3% of the respondents reported that community participate in monitoring and evaluation of projects. This is an important aspect of project implementation that community should be allow to participate as it will enable them determine whether the project is being implemented according to plan and if not, solutions can still be proffered. Conclusively 16.7% representing 32 respondents reported that community is involved in providing security for projects. Involving community in providing security will help keep vandals and thieves away. This could be the reason for high numbers of vandalized projects observed in the study area.

4.5: General issues on community involvement and participation

Table 6: General Issues on community participation

s/n	participation parameters	Frequency	Percentage
1	Were community inhabitants trained on project operations	34	17.7
2	Do you participate in any aspect of project implementation	97	50.5
3	Was the process of selecting participants transparent	14	7.3
4	Was the distribution of project benefits equitable	3	1.56
5	Are the community inhabitants happy about their level of involvement	35	18.2

Source: Field survey 2018

From table 6, it is seen that only 17.7% representing 34 respondents reported that the community inhabitants are trained on the operation of projects. Community members knowing the dos and don'ts of an implemented project can help ensure its sustainability. However, 50.5% representing 97 respondents reported

that they are involved in one aspect or the other of intervention projects including as aspects highlighted in able 5.

Although only 7.3% representing 14 respondents reported that the process of selecting community members that participated in projects is transparent. This view was captioned by a participant of a focus group discussion who said that, “The selection of participants in all aspects of project implementation is not in any way democratic, it was always influenced by politicians and this trends has negatively impacted on many projects”. Similarly only 1.56% representing 3 participants reported that the distribution of project benefits was equitable and this was attributed to massive corruption during the group discussion. Lack of equity in sharing project benefits will make those who felt cheated to see the project as belonging to some ‘set of people’ making them develop indifference towards the project success. In the same vein, only 18.3% representing 35 respondents reported that the community is happy about their level of involvement in government intervention projects.

4.6 Relationship between selected socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and community involvement

Table 7 Pearson’s chi square test for significance between selected socioeconomic characteristics and participation

Dependent variable: Do you participate in any aspect of intervention projects?

s/n	Variable	characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age group	15-24	10	35.7
		25-34	32	61.5
		35-44	27	57.4
		45-54	12	35.3
		55-64	7	43.8
		65 and above	9	60.0
			Total=97	P value= 0.084
2	Gender	Male	82	69.5
		Female	15	20.3
			Total= 97	P value= 0.151
3	Marital Status	Single	14	40.0
		Married	82	54.3
		Widowed	0	0.0
		Separated	1	50.0
			Total= 97	P value= 0.003
4	Educational Attainment	None	8	25.8
		Primary	10	22.7
		Secondary	63	68.5
		Tertiary	16	64.0
			Total = 97	P value = 0.060
5	Income	Low	73	48.7
		Medium	16	55.2
		High	8	61.5
			Total= 97	P value= 0.001

Source: field survey 2018,

From table 7, it is observed that, the chi square test for significance returned p values less than 0.05 for marital status (0.003) and income (0.001). This shows that there is no significant relationship between the two socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and their participation in intervention projects at 95% confidence level. The chi test for Age group (0.084), gender (0.151) and educational attainment (0.060) however had p values greater than 0.05 showing that there is a significant relationship between the three socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and their participation in intervention projects.

Conclusions and Recommendation

This particular study examines community participation and developmental effort of government in rural communities in Ilaje local government area of Ondo State. Structured questionnaire, phone calls and interviews were used to obtain the data used for the study.

Findings from the study revealed that the level of awareness of the community members about interventions efforts of government in the community is high. The results however showed that the level of community participation and involvement in intervention programme is low as the responses for all the parameters used to assess the level of parameters had value below an average of 50%. The study highlighted that the lack of equity in sharing of project benefits could be responsible for the poor attitude of many community members towards intervention programmes.

In other to achieve all round development, community involvement and participation need to be taken as an indispensable fabric of intervention planning. Involving community in the various stage of intervention programmes will not only facilitate the implementation but will also to a large extent ensure its sustainability. This is because when the community is duly involved in the conception, planning, design and implementation of an intervention programme, it becomes their responsibility to ensure the success.

The study therefore make recommendations as follows.

- ✓ That town hall meetings should be held with intervention agency staff and objectively selected community delegates in attendance to discuss areas of intervention needs in the community.
- ✓ That consultations be made with appropriate persons from the beneficiary community on peculiar difficulties that may arise in the process of implementation and how to solve them.
- ✓ That community members should be especially more involved at the Needs assessment and initiation stages of projects to be implemented.

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