

# **Public Participation in Rural Infrastructural Development and Management in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

Infrastructure is a basic physical and organization structures needed for the operation of a society. The service and facilities are necessary for the functionality of settlements in order to have an acceptable standard of living and this achievable in both provision and management of infrastructures through public participation. The aim of this paper is to critically examine the role of the public in rural infrastructural provision and management in Nigeria. Hence, issues considered within this context are nature of infrastructural provision and management in Nigeria, the concept public participation on infrastructure provision, the role of public in infrastructure provision, the effects on the inhabitants and the scope of Vision 20-20 which effectively harnesses the ideals and efforts of the people and responsibly exploits its natural endowments to guarantee a high standard of living and quality of life in rural areas. It is on the above premise that various recommendation is made towards the involvement of public in infrastructural provision and management.

**Keywords:** Public participation, Rural Infrastructure and Vision 20-20.

## **Introduction**

Infrastructure is referred to as the technical structure that support a society such as roads water supply, sewers, bridges, railways, power lines and distribution networks etc. which can be described as physical components of interrelated systems providing commodities and services essentials to enable, sustain or enhances societal living conditions. Rural areas can be described as a part of a region or country which is outside the densely built environments of towns and areas which is engaged primarily in Agricultural activities. These rural settlements are important in the spatial economy of a region as the producing, collecting and forwarding centers for food and material for commerce and industry (Ifesanya 2008). That is the reason why rural areas must be provided infrastructures to increase the rural productivity and all these service needs to be sustained and managed by the inhabitants to increase its lifespan.

Public participation on infrastructural provision in rural areas results to better decision which can be likely acceptable to the people and generate in the people a sense of belonging, acceptance and satisfaction that can also check the imposition of facilities by politician to gain their attention during election periods which not be beneficial to the community. Rural infrastructure cannot be created by peasant's farmers themselves either because most villages have no businesses or enterprises and have no money to spend on infrastructure. On the other hand, since peasants have made contributions to Urban and Industrial development for many years by selling cheap agricultural goods to urban residence and industries. Therefore, capital channels for financing rural infrastructure should be expanded to local government budgets, and social donations to improve rural activities.

The Nigerian Vision 20-20 is the latest in the history of medium-term plans for the

country and promises to surmount some of the problems that maimed the success of previous plans (Marcellus 2009). The Nigeria Vision 2020 is an outcome of research by the American Investment Bank which predicted that Nigeria will be in the league of 20 top economy base on the assessment of her abundant natural and human resource with the assumption that these resources will be effectively managed (Olokesusi 2011). Infrastructure provision is a very important aspect in economic growth and development of any community, the rural areas of the nation's population of food and fibre (Olayiwola and Adeleye 2005). Actually, the rural areas engage in primary activities that form the foundation for any economic development and adequate provision of infrastructure encourages investment in less developed areas allows a wider movement of goods and people, facilities information flows and helps commercialise and diversify the economy.

## **The Concept, Definition and Scope of Public Participation**

Infrastructure is a broad concept like to every facet of the economy and human life. The term infrastructure has been used since 1927 to refer collectively to roads, bridges, rail lines and similar public works that are required for an industrial economy to function. These systems tend to be right cost investments on the part of government and attitude of the policy makers in locating facilities at appropriate areas which can be fully utilized especially rural areas. Public participation as a concept focuses on the ideas that involving stakeholders in decision-making about their communities and broader social issues has important social, economic and political benefits. Infrastructure were traditionally financed by the public sector but in recent years due to general processes of globalization, technological innovation and

amplified citizen assertiveness, the demand for infrastructures has increased as well as the magnitude of the projects. As a result of these demand the public sector has a lack in financial resources to finance the increasing number of projects. Neither the growth of fiscal capacity nor borrowing are likely able to satisfy the requirements for public infrastructure demand. Consequently, providers of infrastructures in rural areas have looked for innovative ways of financing in the attempt to reduce dependence on government in the provision of infrastructure.

Public participation is a process, which enables all residents to formulate their interest proposals and objectives on issues of their concern, directly or through their legitimate representatives and to translate them by consultation and dialogue into decision and action in agreement with all concerned (Theo et al 2001) described it as a crucial means of enhancing the empowerment of people especially if it ensures that disadvantages social groups get the chance to articulate their interest and helps arrive at more appropriate programmes by considering people's needs and experiences. Therefore, this must be balanced against the costs of participation in terms of time and resources in order to design appropriate participatory systems of governance. Such system must be institutionalized and procedures that define the right of every resident to be involved in the planning and implementation process must be established to succeed at all level.

Public participation is not involvement in planning and implementation alone but requires payment of taxes of levy within the community in carrying out infrastructure project that cannot be provided by government. There is a broad agreement that community-based interventions have the potential to be more responsive to the needs and priority of beneficiaries. There is also some evidence that

community-based projects are comparatively cost effective because of lower level of bureaucracy and better knowledge of local cost of materials, because these projects are carried out on locally available skills, materials and financing are likely to be more sustainable. (Tri Nuke 2002) described community participation in service delivery to involve far more than the direct delivery of services. A central issue is how different types of participation may contribute in strengthening both the short and long routes of accountability for service delivery. Effective forms of community participation in service delivery provide both opportunities and incentives for local government officials to respond to community needs. This can create opportunities for more downward accountability and thus reduce the accountability gap between the citizens and policymakers. Transparency at the local level may also be enhanced through score cards for public services or supporting local independent media to act as monitors of project activities. These measures serve to promote a process of slow improvement in accountability.

### **Nature of Infrastructure Provision in Nigeria**

Infrastructure plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth and thereby contributes to the reduction of economic disparity, poverty in our rural areas and deprivations in a country, greater access of the rural dwellers to education, health services, water and sanitation, road network and electricity are needed to bring equitable development and social empowerment to different areas within the country. The state of infrastructure in Nigeria currently, however does not meet the requirement for economic development. These are central to the household life and economic production. Lack of infrastructural facilities is considered to be a major structural weakness, which holds back

economic growth and development. This paper considered facilities like power, education, road which are the main focus of Vision 20-2020. The African Development Bank Group (2009) observed that: the major power gaps seriously impede the growth of the non-oil sector and as a result job creation and poverty reduction. About 40% of the population has access to electricity with only about 30% of their demand fore power being met. The power sector is plagued by recurrent outages to the extent that 90% of industrial customers and a significant number of residential and non-residential customers provide their own power at huge cost to themselves and to the Nigerian economy. The total capacity of power self-generation unit in Nigeria is estimated at about 2.5mw. Electricity was found to be by far most binding constraint to do business in Nigeria for more than 80% of firm surveyed. Electricity induced indirect losses on firm account for 61%.

Oluba (2012) examined the deplorable condition of infrastructure in Nigeria. At present, electricity generation ranges from between 500 to about 3000megawatts, even with the inclusion of three gas powered independent power projects in Niger Delta region, while estimated national consumption is in excess of 10000megawatts. Potential demand in the next few (three) years is estimated at about 15000megawatts. Recently the government mandated a committee with responsibility of creating a blue print for increasing power generation capacity to 6000megawatts in the next 18 months and 10000megawatts by 2011. Saddening enough is that Nigeria is endowed with massive reserves of hydro-energy, petroleum reserves and one of the largest gas reserves in the world.

Rural roads provide direct access to farms. Primary markets and small villages, while rural roads connect villages to small farms with local market and basic services, local

governments and institutions which are the areas usually concerned with the development and maintenance of this structure (Olaseni 2004). But due to the deplorable state of rural roads which have negative impact on Nigerian economy, this gave birth to Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). The directorate made road development as its first priority because of the belief that unless there is access to the rural communities, all other infrastructure like electricity, water and farm input cannot be made available to the rural dwellers (Olayiwola and Adeleye 2005). Motorable roads that are well managed is crucial for smooth and efficient exchange of goods and services across different part of the country as the rural areas and hinterland are connected.

Nigeria has a total road length of 193200km, comprising 34123km federal road, 30500km state and 129577km local government roads. At 2005 prices, these roads networks were estimated to have a replacement value of ₦4.567 trillion. It has been estimated that over the next 10 years ₦300 billion will be required to bring national roads into a satisfactory condition neglect of these roads implies a loss of network value of ₦80 billion per year and operating cost of ₦35 billion per year (FGN 2009). The local road has the highest length which comprises mainly the rural areas where the raw material for urban industries are available, attention must be given to rural roads in different part of the country to have trade efficiency.

Nigeria's healthcare delivery system consists of a network of primary, secondary and tertiary facilities. As at 1992, primary care was largely provided through approximately 4000 health clinics and dispensaries scattered throughout the country. As for secondary care there were about 700 health care centers and 1670 maternity centers: tertiary care was handled through 12 University teaching

hospitals with about 6500 beds. As of 1999, there were an estimated 0.2 physicians and 1.7 hospital bed per 1000 people. The target areas for mass procurement of medical equipment at the teaching hospitals. The lack of proper facilities and inadequate remuneration of public sector healthcare workers have also spurred the development of a limited number of privately owned hospital which cater to those who can afford them. The country is in need of medical supplies and equipment. Some pharmaceuticals are manufactured in Nigeria. In 2000, 57% of the population had access to safe drinking water and 63% had adequate sanitation. As of 1999, total health care expenditure was estimated at 2.8% of GDP (Encyclopedia of the Nation 2012).

Education is the key to empowering Nigerians to acquire the right attitudes, skills and knowledge that would propel the achievement of vision 20-20. Dung-Gwom (2010). The Human Development Report of UNDP (2008) show that Nigeria is still at the low level of human development index (HDI) based on 2005 data as 0.47, the adult literacy rate of 69.1% and combined gross enrolment ration for primary, secondary and tertiary education stood at 56.2%. These and other indicators show that Nigeria is far behind in human capital development and this calls for policy intervention towards transforming the economy from its present state to knowledge based oriented economy by 2020 through intensive effort in human capital development. Dung-Gwom (2010) therefore for any nation to move forward in education must be developed it through allocation certain huge budget to provide equipment and human resources for effective returns.

Educational system can adapt to poor governance when the sector is not having enough allocation and oversight of teacher performance. As identified Soludo (2007).

Nigeria is not investing anywhere enough in its human capital to be able to face the challenges of global competitiveness and knowledge driven economy as claimed in the vision 2020 report. Nigeria is allocating about the lowest percentage of its GDP to education, which is the vital area to concentrate by the present government improper funding of education in Nigeria resulted to difference vies all over the nation. About 60% of Nigerian graduates are said to be unemployable.

### **The Role of Public on Infrastructure Provision**

Mobilization of Community members to identify problems, plan and manage projects helps strengthen local capacity for collective action (Ashok 2006). There are various ways in which public participation processes and mechanism can strengthen accountability and also affect delivery outcomes. Rural dwellers can make their intension known by creating conducive atmosphere or interaction with policy makers to influence policy, strategies and expenditure priorities at local areas according their wishes and preferences to improve the community.

Strengthening the inhabitants voice enhance accountability of the policy makers motivating them to be responsive to needs of community and stimulate demand for better public service from service providers. Rural communities can be empowered by law to recall their leaders, which motivate elected leaders to be more responsive to the needs of their community (WDR 2004). This is very important because most of the inhabitants' neglect their role pursuing what will not improve the lives of the people just because the leaders want to enrich their pockets.

Healthy community require constant attention and nurturing community become what

they are based on choices people make over long period of time. They are shaped by the decisions we make or fail to make. Strategic plan is a useful tool for any rural areas that wishes to change and grow in terms of infrastructural facilities development and community development process consist of strategic planning, implementation and evaluation. Policy makers exert influence on the providers through an implicit or explicit contractual relationship, which the WDR 2004 referred to as Compact or Management. The provider is to deliver a given level of performance following administrative instruction or according to a contract, and the policy makers uses the instruments of financing, regulation and monitoring and evaluation to exert control.

### **The Scope of Vision 2020 and Infrastructural Provision**

Nigeria's economic potential is well recognized. It is the biggest economy in the West African sub-region endowed with abundant natural resources due to its location, yet Nigeria has realized very little of these potential, previous efforts at planning and visioning were not sustaining. The history of economic stagnation, declining welfare and social instability, has undermined development.

The draft document of the vision 2020 was launched in November 2009, the critical priority areas identified for immediate attention were: decentralization of governance, creating a global competitive economy, sustainability, electoral reform, land use/property reform, public service reforms, National Security, human capacity development and critical infrastructure with particular emphasis on power and transportation. Dung-Gwom (2010), it will be very advantageous if all this all this can be put in place, so that Nigeria will have a large,

strong, diversified and competitive, technologically enabled economy that effectively harnesses the talent and energy of its people and responsibly exploits its natural environments to guarantee a high standard of living and quality of life to its citizens. Dung-Gwom (2010). Nigeria is blessed with different natural resources to turn the economy around therefore, vision 2020 looks like an instrument to achieve the status or standard.

In recognition that the development is maintenance of essential public infrastructure is a critical ingredient for sustained economic growth and poverty reduction, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2007 by Soludo, says infrastructure plays an important role in growth performance of any economy. CBN said further that "infrastructure problems were ranked top, rated as nearly two-and-a-half times worse than the next biggest problem (access to finance) in World Bank's investment climate survey. Infrastructure is the capital stock that provides public goods and services. "It creates the environment for productive activities to take place, encourage investment, allow wider movement of goods and people, and facilities information flows and helps to commercialise and diversify the economy." Iheanyi (2011). To achieve vision 2020 in Nigeria's context, basic infrastructures like motorable roads, power, education and health facilities must be provided mostly in the rural areas where majority of raw materials used by urban industries were embedded.

Aigbokhan (1999) gives examples of physical infrastructure as public utilities such as power, telecommunications, piped water supply, sanitation and sewage, solid waste collection and disposal piped gas as well as public work which include roads, major dams and canal work for irrigation and drainage and other transport project like urban and inter-urban railways, urban transport, seaport and waterways and

airports in realization of vision 2020 in Nigeria for rapid development. Rural areas need urgent attention because most of the resources needed for economic and physical development were embedded in such part of the country. The only instrument that can make it come to existence is by provision of necessary and adequate infrastructural facilities mentioned earlier to compliment the effort of rural dwellers.

### **Effect of Rural Infrastructure on the Inhabitants**

An understanding of the concept of development will give a clearer picture of rural development which can not take effect without the presence of infrastructure facilities. It is important to note that rural development plays an important role in the Nigerian economic development both in the micro and macro levels. Umebali (2006) literature shows that greater percentage of the total Nigerian population live in rural areas and most of them are involved in Agriculture. If we must make the rural areas attractive to live, then meaningful effort geared towards sustainable rural development must be aggressively and vigorously pursued as this will alter the certainty of poor quality of life in the rural areas which Umebali (2006) sees as the main phobia that has often pushed migrant to the perceived opportunities in this erroneous misconception by successive government that rural development is synonymous with Agricultural development only. Efforts by such government to pump money into Agricultural development did not yield meaningful change desired hence effort should be made to include provision of modern infrastructure, primary healthcare, food and shelter, employment opportunities, recreational facilities, affordable and compulsory primary and secondary education to reduce illiteracy, good accessibility to farm areas to transport agricultural products to nearest market to

generate adequate income to better life of farmers, loans and other incentives to part of rural development for the benefits of rural dwellers.

As at today, rural areas need to be given priority attention. Several reasons for such urgency include high and unacceptable rate of poverty, poor access to social and economic infrastructure and service such as access to safe drinking water supply and sanitation, higher rate of health indicator such as infant mortality rate, malnutrition and disease prevalence and lower enrolment of children in schools. All these indicators affect rural development; most of the able bodied have migrated to the urban centers where all these facilities are available and affordable neglecting the rural areas to remain the way they presently are in Nigeria

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This paper examined the public participation in rural infrastructural provision and management in Nigeria. Generally, infrastructure is totally in deplorable condition in our rural areas within the country. In some areas, infrastructure like electricity, road, water supply, drainage etc. are virtually non-existent. The maintenance culture is lacking on the part of the government and the inhabitants to allow continuous use of present facilities, due to fact that the present situation on state of infrastructure developed in Nigeria. To enhance public participation in infrastructure provision and management, the following recommendations should be considered.

- ❖ There should be cordial relationship between the inhabitants and government in Federal, State and Local Government more open in erecting or provision pf any facilities in an area.
- ❖ Adequate funding should be channel to rural areas ro provide adequate infrastructure like

- good roads to transport farm product, health facilities, building of schools and provision of electricity to increase social life
- ❖ The inhabitants participating in various projects should ensure to retain good plans and policies overtime through the development of a long lasting and stable constituency.
  - ❖ Establishment of industries in rural areas will be of benefit to provide adequate facilities and reduce rural-urban migration.
  - ❖ Adequate planning should be practiced in locating facilities to reduce congestion and pollution
  - ❖ Directorate of food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) should be revisited with adequate fund and new policy that will be in line with present state of rural infrastructure facilities.
  - ❖ In order to meet the challenges of closing the infrastructure gap, Nigeria needs to adopt various initiatives which include; privatization, concessioning and public private partnership (PPP) and sourcing of fund from multi-lateral sources like the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB).

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