Community Involvement in the National Youth Service Corps Community Development Service Projects in Abia State, Nigeria
https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jae.v23i4.8

Arigbo, Precious. Obinna
Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria Nsukka
E-mail: precious.arigbo@unn.edu.ng, arigboprecious@gmail.com
Phone: +2347038788969

Onuekwusi, Gideon. C
Department of Rural Sociology and Extension, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike
Email: Onuekwusi.gideon@mouau.edu.ng
Phone: +2348037753165

Ikoro, Dorothy. E.
Department of Rural Sociology and Extension, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike
dorothyikoro@gmail.com,
phone: +2348033569098

Adeogun Taiwo Foluke
Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria Nsukka
Email: adeogun.taiwo@unn.edu.ng
Phone: +2348037717797

Abstract

This study examined involvement of communities in the National Youth Service Corps Community Development Service project in Abia state, Nigeria. The study employed purposive and random sampling technique in the selection of a sample size of 180 respondents. Data on community involvement in NYSC CDS were collected with the aid of a questionnaire while the projects executed were gotten from NYSC state secretariat. Data was analysed using frequency, mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The major findings show that corps members carried out more of human development projects than infrastructural projects, community members were involved in the NYSC CDS activities but not always ($\bar{x}$ = 1.33). Projects executed by corps members had positive and significant relationship with community involvement in the community development activities of the NYSC (r = 0.237, P≤0.01). The study recommended that more awareness and sensitization campaigns need to be done to get people involved in the NYSC CDS development projects, while high level of transparency by corps members in project planning and execution, and community members and corps members should work together in identifying projects and resources for execution of projects.

Keyword: Community involvement, national youth service corps, and community development service

Introduction

Nigeria as a developing country is plagued by the problems of under development, among which are poverty, mass illiteracy, acute shortage of high skilled manpower coupled with uneven distribution of the skilled manpower across the nation (Anumudu, Umar & Madu, 2013). The establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme on 22 May, 1973 was thus a response by the Federal government to obviate the aforementioned scourges.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is an organization set by the Nigerian Government to involve the country's graduates in the development of the country. There is no military conscription in Nigeria, but since 1973, graduates of universities and later polytechnics have been required to take part in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program for one year. This is known as National Service. Corps members are posted to States far from their cities of origin. They are expected to mix with people of other tribes, social, and family backgrounds, to learn the culture of the indigenes in the place they are posted to. This action is aimed to bring about unity in the country and to help youth appreciate other ethnic groups. (Chimeleze, 2012).

There are four (4) cardinal programmes of the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC). Among these programmes is the Community Development Service (CDS). The Community Development Service (CDS) is aimed at harnessing the skills, creativity and innovativeness of Corps members. Corps members are expected to identify the needs of their host communities and mobilise members of their host communities to embark on the projects (NYSC, 2013).

Through this programme, many Corps members have actively participated in rural development programmes where they were able to construct bridges, health care centres, classroom blocks, market stalls, culverts etc. They had also carried out projects like HIV sensitization, adult literacy campaign, extra-mural classes for students, road safety campaign etc. Corps members participate actively in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) through the War against Poverty (WAP) programme of the scheme (NYSC, 2016).

It is assumed that the community development service of NYSC may have contributed significantly towards the development of the rural areas because government, no matter how benevolent cannot satisfy the felt/latent needs of her communities (Onumadu, 2013). In an effort to accelerate rural development through youth's participation the Federal Government of Nigeria built in the community development service as one of the cardinal programmes of the National service years for Nigerian graduates. The community development service of the NYSC is very crucial because it taps into the practices in traditional African societies in their regular resort to meeting common challenges through common efforts. This practice of practical communal work to build communities and confront communal challenges

from road network to traditional physical infrastructure, which has been eroded by urbanization and modernization, was reconstructed and injected into the scheme.

Over the years, youths have been directly involved in the voluntary development of their communities especially through the national youth's service wherein many have left a lasting life transforming projects in their host communities. The NYSC community development service, in keeping to its objectives, has impacted positively to rural development. Since the inception of the NYSC in 1973, graduate youths have initiated and executed many rural development projects and also had mobilised their host community to engage in developmental projects.

The projects executed by these corps members would not have taken place without the support and involvement of the local people. But the question is, to what extent are the local people involved in the community development service projects of the NYSC, and what relationship does their involvement have with the number of projects executed, and what are the categories of the projects executed by the NYSC community development service in the state. There seems to be a dearth of research in area of projects carried out by these corps member and the community involvement. The reciprocal relationship between community involvement and the number of projects initiated and executed by these graduate youths (corps members) through their community development service is not known. Based on these missing links, this research is carried out to analyse the National Youth Service Community Development Service Projects, and community involvement in Abia state, Nigeria

Objectives of the Study

This study was based on the following objectives:

1. categorize community development service/ projects executed by members of the NYSC in the past 5 years;
2. access the involvement of benefiting communities in NYSC CDS projects; and
3. ascertain the relationship between peoples' involvement in NYSC CDS projects and the number of projects carried out.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Abia State, Nigeria. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used in the selection of the sample size. Two agricultural zones (Uumahia, and Ohafia) were purposively selected out of the three (3) agricultural zones in the state on the basis that more projects were carried out in these zones by corps members. One local government from each of the selected agricultural zones were purposively selected. In each of these local governments, three (3) autonomous communities (villages) were randomly selected out of eight (8) autonomous communities (villages) in each of the LGAs. Finally, 30 respondents

'were selected from each of the autonomous communities, giving rise to a total of 180 respondents for the study.

To realise the level at which community were involved in the CDS activities a 3- point Likert-type scale of involved = 3 sometimes involved = 2, and not involved = 1 was used. Respondents' mean scores were computed for each question by adding the weights of 3+2+1. The mean score of 2.0 was used as a bench mark mean. Responses with mean scores of 2.0 and above were considered to be involved while less than 2.0 were considered not involved.

Data for the study were collected using secondary data obtained from the NYSC state secretariat and primary data gotten with the aid of a questionnaire. The data were analysed with frequencies, percentages and mean, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

Result and Discussion

Categories of the Community Development Services/projects Executed

The community development services/projects executed by members of the NYSC community development service (CDs) were categorized into infrastructural projects and human development projects. The infrastructural projects included projects like construction of classrooms, bridges, roads, bus stops, status and symbols, while the human developments projects included immunization and sensitization campaign, donations to the less privileged, organisation of extra moral classes, adult literacy campaign, skill acquisition/ vocational training, sports development and operation of mobile clinic. The result of the analysis is presented in table 1

The result in the Table 1 reveals that corps members executed both infrastructural projects and human development projects. In the area of infrastructural projects, the majority 58.3% of the respondents agreed that corps members executed projects in the areas of construction and renovation of classroom blocks. This is expected because the majority of the corpers do their primary assignment in schools and as such spend much of their time in schools. This result also agrees with the secondary data collected from the NYSC Abia State Secretariat where corps members carry out more of renovation and construction of class room block more than other infrastructural projects.

The second in the list of infrastructural projects agreed upon by the respondents as shown in Table 1 was building of statues and symbols (51.7%), followed by building of bus stop and shed (38.3%) and the construction of public toilets (29.4%). The least ranked infrastructural projects as agreed by the respondents were construction of maternity centres (11.1%), rehabilitation of roads (11.1%) and construction of bridges (8.3%). The reason for this could be due to the fact that these projects require huge capital to execute and besides take longer period than the one-year duration of the NYSC service year. Besides it is worthy to note that despite the huge

capital, corps members still under took such projects, though very few as shown in the Table 1, a case in point was the grading of Amapu-Amaputa Road in Isiala Ngwa, and the construction of a concrete foot bridge in Akpukpa in Isuikwuato all planned and executed by corps members.

In the area of human development projects as shown in Table 1, campaign against HIV AIDs (69.4%) ranked the upper most in the list of the responses by the respondents. The reason for this could be the presence of the Peer Education Training Programme sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), whereby corps members who are posted to secondary schools are trained as anti HIV /AIDS Vanguards.

The second in the rank is vocational training / skill acquisition (65.5%); this is followed by organisation of extra moral classes (61.7%), donation to the less privilege (60%), and donations of books and equipment (50.6%). The reason why there is relative high percentage in these areas of development could be because some of these projects require little or no capital to get them executed.

The least ranked among the human development project executed by corps members were obtained in the areas of promotion of community theatre (7.8%), operation of mobile clinic (18.9%), and development of sporting activity (19.4%). The reason this, in addition to the huge amount of resources involved which corps members claimed they lack, could be attributed to the relative low number of serving corps members with speciality in medical sciences in the case of operation of mobile clinic and the community involvement and support which the corps member often do not have.

The overall findings in Table 1 fall in line with what was observed by in Osun State Nigeria where campaign against HIV/AIDS, immunization campaigns, organisation of extra moral classes, building of bus stop and building of statues and symbols were the commonest achievements of the NYSC CDS, while on the other hand, construction of market stalls, construction of bridges, operation of mobile clinic, and promotion of community theatre were the least ranked projects carried out by corps members. It also conforms with the findings of Odoh and Innocent (2014) that in recent time, youths have realised the importance of self-help projects in improving the way of life and living standards of their communities.

Table 1 also shows that corps member executed more human development projects than the infrastructural projects. This is expected to be so because of the huge amount of capital and the bureaucracy involved in executing infrastructural projects. This finding is in conformity with the observation of Ladele and Olaniyan (2015) where community members perceived the provisions of infrastructural projects by corps members as least effective when compared to the educational projects of the NYSC CDS.

Table 1: Categorization of community developments service projects executed by members of NYSC CDS from 2010-2014

Projects	Percentage	Rank
Infrastructural projects		
Construction and renovation of classroom blocks	58.3	1st
Building of statues and symbols	51.7	2nd
Building of bus-stops	38.3	3rd
Construction of Toilets	29.4	4th
Construction of culverts	21.1	5th
Building of round abouts	18.9	6th
Construction of market stalls	15.6	7th
Construction of maternity centres	11.1	8th
Construction of bridges	8.3	9th
Rehabilitation of roads	11.1	9th
Human development projects		
Campaign against HIV/AIDS	69.4	1st
Vocational training / skill acquisition	65.5	2nd
Organisation of extra mural classes	61.7	3rd
Donation to the less privileged	60.0	4th
Book donations/ equipment	50.6	5th
Campaign against drug abuse	44.4	6th
Immunization campaign	43.9	7th
Provision of adult literacy programs	26.7	8th
Development of sporting activity	19.4	9th
Operation of mobile health clinic	18.9	10th
Promotion of community theatre	7.8	11th

* Multiple responses

The result in Table 2 shows the result of secondary data collected from NYSC state secretariat in Abia State on personal community development projects of corps members for a period of five years 2010-2014. The analysis of the data revealed that, in the period under study that corps members in their personal CDS carried about 68 different skill acquisition and vocational training projects, constructed and renovated (31) classroom blocks, laboratories, and library, constructed about (11) community bus stop, 27 toilets, renovated and re-equipped about (16) community health centres, they also made available to the host community portable water supply in that the rehabilitated and sunk about (13) bore hole and several donations to the less privilege. This result is in tandem with the primary data presented in Table 1 wherein it was ascertained that the corps members carried out both infrastructural and human development projects.

Table 2: Community development service projects in Abia State for the Past five (5) years (2010-2014)

Local Government Area	Road construction	Drilling and rehabilitation of Borehole/water scheme	Construction and renovation of	Construction of bridges	Construction of toilets	Bus stop/markets sheds	Skill acquisition and vocational training	Construction and rehabilitation of community health	Laboratories /library	Sensitization	Signs and symbols	Donation to the less privilege	ICT Centre
Ohafia	-	1	-	-	2	-	2	4	3	1	3	2	1
Aba North	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-
Ugwunagbo	-	4	5	-	1	1	10	-	5	3	-	6	-
Umuahia North	-	3	3	-	5	1	14	5	6	18	8	15	5
Ukwa West	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	1	-
Isiala Ngwa North	1	-	-	-	2	2	3	-	1	1	3	1	-
Bende	-	3	3	-	2	4	2	-	2	2	2	2	2
Arochukwu	-	-	1	-	2	-	1	1	-	2	-	2	-
Isuikwuato	-	1	5	5	9	3	14	4	9	12	8	12	3
Umuahia South	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	-	-	1	-	2	1
Ukwa East	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	-
Aba South	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-
Isiala Ngwa South	-	1	-	-	1	-	5	-	-	1	1	1	-
Ossisioma	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	1	-	2	-
Uminneochi	-	-	2	-	1	-	5	1	-	1	2	2	-
Ikwuano	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Obingwa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Total	**1**	**13**	**20**	**5**	**27**	**11**	**68**	**16**	**27**	**46**	**29**	**50**	**12**

Source: Abia State NYSC Secretariat, 2015

Community Involvement in NYSC CDS Activities

Community involvement in NYSC CDS was assessed under ten (10) different areas of involvement, they included; situation analysis, identification of community needs, project planning, awareness creation, mobilisation of community members, financial contributions, provision of labour, project implantation, supervision of projects and monitoring and evaluation of project. The result of level of community involvement in these areas is presented in the Table 3.

The result in Table 3 reveals that the community members were involved in the NYSC CDS activities but not always ($\bar{x}$ = 1.33). The highest level of involvement were recorded in the area of awareness creation with the mean score of ($\bar{x}$ = 1.43), Followed by the identification of community needs ($\bar{x}$ = 1.42), mobilization of community members ($\bar{x}$, = 1.37), project planning ($\bar{x}$ = 1.34), provision of labour ($\bar{x}$ = 1.28), financial contribution ($\bar{x}$ = 1.27), supervision of the projects ($\bar{x}$ = 1.24), situation analysis ($\bar{x}$ = 1.23), project implementation and monitoring and evaluation of projects ($\bar{x}$ = 1.22). In all, the level of involvement of the community in the NYSC CDS activity was seen to be generally lowThe reason for low involvement of people in NYSC CDS could be as a result of people perception of the programme; they often see the NYSC CDS as programme meant solely for corps members for which they are rewarded afterwards. While some see it as a way corps members seek recognition with the government and not actually a selfless service to the community. Many others were of the opinion that the CDS is part of the mandatory one year service to the nation and that the CDS is a debt each corps members owe to her host community.

The result was in contrast to the assumptions of people participation in development programmes. According to Green & Haines, (2012) one of the key assumptions of participation or involvement of local people in community development is that local residents will be more supportive of the project, and therefore increase the likelihood of its success, if residents have input in the decision-making process. Also, local residents probably have a better knowledge about assets and needs of the community. Finally, public participation is considered the centre-piece of the democratic process. This result now implies that corps members identified the community needs, plan and execute projects on their own initiatives thereby neglecting the principle of self-help for which the NYSC CDS is formed, and still tending towards the top down approach of development that have not been effective in rural development approaches.

Table 3: Community involvement in executing NYSC CDS activities

Activities	Mean	Rank
Awareness creation	1.43	1st
Identification of community needs	1.42	2nd
Mobilisation of community members	1.37	3rd
Project planning	1.34	4th
Provision of labour	1.28	5th
Financial contribution	1.27	6th
Situation analysis	1.23	7th
Supervision of project	1.24	8th
Project implementation	1.22	9th
Monitoring and evaluation of project	1.22	9th
Grand mean	**1.3**	
Bench mark mean	**2.0**	

Relationship Between Peoples' Involvement in NYSC CDS Projects and the Number of Projects.

Table 4 indicates that the number of projects executed by corps members has a positive and significant relationship with community involvement in the community development activities of the NYSC (r = 0.237; P≤0.05). This implies that the more the community are involved in the activities of the NYSC CDS the more projects the corps members execute and carry out. Community involvement can come in several ways either by way of financial contribution, provision of labour or even in the area of projects planning and execution, whichever way the community gets themselves involved, it serves as an incentive and motivation for corps members to execute more projects.

Table 4 Relationship between people's involvement in NYSC CDS activities and number projects

Variables	Correction coefficient
Projects	0.237

*P≤0.05 (2-tailed).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The National Youth Service Corps Community Development Service has rendered invaluable support to the development of Abia's rural communities, especially in the area of project execution wherein in the past five years they had executed both infrastructural and human development projects to the benefit of their host community. The contribution of the scheme to the development of the area had been witnessed especially in the area of education, skill acquisition construction and renovation of class room blocks and sensitization and awareness creation, etc. There is a low level of involvement of community members in the NYSC CDS. The study concludes that the involvement of the community in the NYSC CDS activities will lead to greater achievement and rural development projects. More awareness and sensitization need to be created by both the government and corps member to get people involved in the NYSC CDS development. There should be high level of transparency by corps members in project planning and execution in other win the support of community members. Community members and corps members should work together in identifying projects and resources for execution of projects.

References

Anumudu, C. N, Umar, A, & Madu, M. E (2013) Review of poverty reduction policies in Nigeria: Myth and reality. *International journal of economics, commerce and management* 1(2) 1-16

Chimeleze, L. C. (2012). Design and implementation of NYSC orientation camp information system (a case study NYSC Awgu). Department of computer engineering, Caritas University, Amorji NIke Enugu.

Green, G. P., & Haines, A. (2012). Asset building & Community Development.Thousands oaks, ca: sage

Ladele, A. A and Olaniyan O. A (2015). Perceived Effectiveness of the Community Development Service of the National Youths Service Corps Scheme in host Communities in Osun State. CYIAP Network Conference FUTA,

National Youth Service Corps (2016) All You Need to Know About the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). Retrieved 20/02/19 from https://nigerianscholars.com/school-news/about-the-national-y

National Youth Service Corps magazine (2013). Community development programme

Odoh, E., and Innocent, E. O. (2014). Role of the Youths in National development. *Singaporean Journal of business Economics, and Management Studies* 3(2)

Onumadu, F. N, (2013). Rual community development in Nigeria in Nwachukwu (2013). Agricultural Extension and Rural Development. Lamp House Publishers P. O. Box 700, Umuahia, Abia State Nigeria