

PROJECT EXECUTION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED AREA COUNCILS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: Local government administration has been described as a vital vehicle to achieving sustainable development at the grassroots. This study seeks to examine project execution and rural development in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The core objectives of the study to examine the perception of the rural dwellers on developmental project execution in FCT-Abuja, impact of projects execution on rural development in FCT-Abuja and factors influencing project execution and rural development in FCT-Abuja. The study adopted survey research whereby questionnaire was administered to residents in selected area councils in FCT-Abuja. Taro Yamane formula was used to arrive at a sample size of 400 out of a total population of 3,067,500. Data gotten through questionnaire were arranged in tables, pie chart and analyzed using simple percentage and mean average. Secondary data elicited from journal articles, books and official documents were analyzed using desktop research method. The study found out that majority of the respondents in the selected area councils were dissatisfied about projects executed by area councils where they reside. Also, poor project conception, planning, misappropriation of funds, financial corruption and inadequate project management experts were significant factors affecting project execution and rural development in area councils in FCT-Abuja. The study recommended that social media and other media platforms can be used by area councils' authorities to disseminate the progress reports of area councils' developmental projects so that the local peoples' perception can be changed positively. Lastly, well-articulated projects conception, planning, involvement of professional project managers, adequate monitoring and evaluation of project expenditure can improve execution of projects and rural development in FCT-Abuja.

Keywords: Project, Project execution, local government, development, rural development

Introduction

One of the primary responsibilities of government is to guarantee that its residents have a means of obtaining high-quality products and services, and the local government, as a level of government, is certainly not an exemption. Local government has been and remains to be among the primary cause of growth in many regions of the world, and its value and effect on residents' daily lives is unquestionable. Many nations in developing nations are deeply concerned about the subject of rural development. Rural development is increasingly being recognized as an important tool in the overall development of the modern developing countries. This is due to the significant infrastructural disparity between rural and urban regions in terms of facilities, distribution of resources, growth of human resources, and job opportunities are all areas where rural development is critical (Odo, 2014).

Due to this disparity, rural communities are in a worse economic condition. It has resulted in rural-urban mobility, which has increased urban unemployment while denying rural regions of agricultural labor. This condition was a result of previously highlighted issues such as infrastructure, peasant and subsistence agriculture, a weak transportation system, limited commercial activity, a shortage of food preservation amenities, and an erosion threat (Odo, 2014).

In many developing countries, the state of affairs does not appear to be improving significantly. Rural development is a crucial indicator of societal advancement and change globally. Absolutely no country can claim to have accomplished improvement if a considerable proportion of its rural residents continue to live in desperate need, lack, and socioeconomic destitution (Akhakpe et al., 2012). Nevertheless, empirical data reveals that underdevelopment has persisted in Nigeria because people are apparently unaware of, or unconcerned about, the rationales for the formation of local governments.

In the nation of Nigeria, for example, a large percentage of the total population lives in rural regions. These rural inhabitants are primarily peasant farmers who struggle to sustain themselves and provide the most basic essentials of life for the members of their immediate families. The amount of poverty among Nigerian rural inhabitants is an expressive witness to the dire need for rural development (Egweme and Odo, 2012). Recognising the aforementioned issues prompted the federal military administration in 1976 to embark on a bold endeavor to overhaul Nigeria's local government system. As stated by Okafor (1994), the provisions of the unified system of local government, which operates across the nation, comprised of the formation of comparable-sized local councils with equivalent legislative powers and equal representation. The essence of the reform was to bring about stable increase in rural economy and general enhancement of the quality of life in the areas (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1980).

In the same vein, the Nigerian Constitution (1999) provides that every local government in the country shall participate in the economic planning and development of its own area of jurisdiction. To strengthen this great task bestowed on the local governments, General Ibrahim Babangida, reminded Nigerians that local governments were not created to pay salaries only, but to ensure collective participation in governance, motivate physical economic development, create the conditions for development opportunities and provide social services which can improve the well-being of the rural people.

Over the years, the local government areas in Nigeria have been allocated state resources and also received aids from local and international donors to carry our developmental projects and the area councils have not been left out. The area councils in Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria represents a good sample of rural administration in Nigeria reflects a number of grassroots development concerns. It is in this light of these issues that the study seeks to examine project execution and rural development in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

Statement of the Problem

The local government was established for various reasons such as facilitating local participation in politics, rural development, bringing government closer to the grassroots etc. Despite, the lofty ideas behind the creation of local government, it has not function optimally to bring about the desired results. The area councils in FCT in partnership with other NGOs and foreign donors have carried out few developmental projects such as rural

electrification, construction of roads, bridges, schools, establishment of primary health care centers.

There are several factors which some scholars have identified as stumbling blocks on the way of rural development in Nigeria. These include: lack of adequate organization frame work and orientation, lack of dedication and commitment on the part of the local government councils to the cause of development, misplacement of organization priorities and consequently, misdirection of funds (Akhakpe et al., 2012).

In addition, lack of adequate executive capacity arising from lack of adequately trained, motivated and dedicated staff for effective and efficient implementation of council decision and unreliable external funding and inability to generate revenue for development purposes. For instance, some of the areas councils in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have not been able to successfully carried out a great number of developmental projects which would bring about massive grassroots employment across all the six area councils. Several studies have been carried out to examine the impact of local government on rural development but very few have paid attention to local residents' satisfaction on project execution in selected area councils of FCT. This study is being carried out to fill this gap.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to assess the impact of project execution on rural development in Federal Capital Territory. However, the specific objectives are to:

- i. Find out the level of satisfaction of local residents of Federal Capital Territory, Abuja as regards to rural development projects.
- ii. Ascertain factors affecting project execution in the area councils in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Literature Review

Projects

A project is a group of tasks, performed in a definable time period, in order to meet a specific set of objectives. As project has the following characteristic, it is likely to be a one-time programme, it has a life cycle with a specific start and end data, it has budget and likely to require the use of multiple resources, most of which may be scarce and have to be shared among others. It may require the establishment of a special organization or the crossing of traditional organizational boundaries (Harvey, 1999). Akarakiri (2007) defines project as any scheme, or part of a scheme for investing recourse which can reasonably be analyzed and evaluated as independent unit. Spinner (1997) also defines project as series of task or activities that have several distinguishing characteristics. Such as: Having specific starting and ending data, Achieving a specified result on product, well defined objectives, A unique, non-repetitive endeavor. This view point is collaborated by Verna (1995) when he defines project as the investment of capital in a time bound intervention to create assets. In the same way Kerzner (2003) further define project as an assignment that has to be undertaken and completed within a set time, budget, resources and performance specification designed to meet the needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries. Although, there are numbers of general definition of the term project; it must be recognized at the outset that projects are distinct from other organizational processes. As a rule, a process refers to ongoing, day-to-day activities in which an organization engages, while producing goods

and services, processes use existing systems properties and capabilities in a continuous, fairly repetitive manner.

Projects, on the other hand, take place outside the normal, process-oriented world of the firm. Certainly, in some organizations, such as construction, day-to-day processes center on the creation and development of project. Nevertheless, for the majority of organizations project management activities remain unique and separate from the manner in which more routine, process driven work is performed (Kerzner, 2003). Project work is continuously evolving, established its own work rules, and is the antithesis of repetition in the work place. As a result, it represents an exciting alternative to business as usual for many companies. Probably the simplest definition is found in the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) guide of the Project Management Institute (PMI). PMI is the world's largest professional project management association, with over 200,000 members' world wide as of 2005. In their PMBOK guide, a project is defined as "a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product or service". PMI (2005) examined the various elements of projects as identified by the following set of definitions

Projects are complex, one-time processes - A project arises for a specific purpose or to meet a stated goal. They are complex because they typically require the co-ordinate inputs of numerous members of the organization, project members may be from different departments or other organizational unit or from one functional area. On the other hand, some projects such as new product introductions, work best with representatives from many functions, including marketing, engineering, production and design. Because a project is intended to fulfill a stated goal, it is temporary. It exists only until its goal has been met, and at that point, it is dissolved.

Projects are limited by budget, schedule and resources. Project work requires that members work with limited financial and human resources for a specified time period. They do not run indefinitely. Once the assignment is completed, the project team disbands. Until those points, all its activities are constrained by limitations on budget and personnel availability. Projects are "resource constrained" activities. Projects are developed to resolve a clear goal or set goals. There is no such thing as a project team with an on-going, non-specific purpose. Its goals, or deliverables, define the nature of the project and that is its team. Projects are designed to yield a tangible result, either as a new product or service. Whether the goal is to build a new bridge, implement a new account receivable system or win a presidential election, the goal must be specific and the project organized to achieve a stated aim.

Projects are customer focused: whether the project is responding to the needs of an internal organizational unit (e.g. accounting) or intended to exploit a market opportunity external to the organization the underlying purpose of any project is to satisfy customer needs. In the past, this goal was sometimes overlooked. Projects were considered successful if they attained technical, budgetary or scheduling goals. More and more, however, companies have realized that the primary goal of a project is customer satisfaction. If that goal is neglected, a firm runs the risk of "doing the wrong things well" pursuing projects that may be done efficiently but ignore customer needs or fail commercially.

Therefore, project is not determined by the amount of money involved or its size. For example, the construction of a house, relocation of an office, introducing a new business, installing new facilities for education or health are all projects because they are unique, have well-defined objectives and constrained by a time factor in a broad sense.

Asgari et al (2018) describe projects as a set of activities that should be conducted within clear limits of scope, specified deadlines, approved costs, and detailed service quality. The exclusion of one of these four factors can lead to a costly or failed project. Szalay et al. (2017), for their part, define project as a temporary effort to create a specific product or service, somehow different from all other products and services, having a well-defined start and finish, using resources, being conducted by people, and following parameters such as cost, time and quality. The concept of project is described in a similar way by the Project Management Institute (PMI, 2017): a temporary effort undertaken to create a product, service or exclusive result. Projects are carried out to achieve aims by means of delivery production. Their temporary nature indicates they have a definitive start and end. The term temporary does not necessarily imply short duration, it refers to their engagement and endurance; furthermore, it does not apply to the product, service.

This study is focused on projects within the context of promoting rural development. In this context, the area councils are saddled with the responsibilities of ensuring local residents get the benefits of good governance by providing the basic social and economic amenities such as economic empowerment schemes, educational service and facilities, roads, culverts, rural electrification amongst others.

Local Government

Prior to the attainment of independence in Nigeria, there was no uniformity in the local government administrations. According to Yahaya (1989), two different administrations emerged in Northern and Southern Nigeria; each of them conformed strongly to the ideological orientation of regional political class in power. There was relative democratic system of government in existence in the south where people were allowed to participate in governance, while the north was said to be highly centralized and undemocratic.

From the foregoing, there was no uniform style of Native Authority administration throughout Nigeria. This means that each locality had its own peculiarities applied on the people under its domain, which had its belief rooted on the existing traditional norms. Local governments in Nigeria have a long historic background. Prior to the advent of British colonial administration in Nigeria, there was already in existence in various parts of the country, some form of local administration with various formal political institutions. These political institutions were structurally diverse. But behind the adversity, a general basis for local government existed. It was on this basis that Indirect Rule was developed as a British administration policy. Thus, Indirect Rule was in reality a euphemism for the Native Authority system which was centered on traditional structures i.e. the Resident, the Native Authority, the Native Treasury and the Native Court (Bello-Imam, 1996). In the same vein, Shehu (2008), asserts that during the colonial period in Nigeria, local government administration was known as the Native Authority system. Also, between 1950 and 1960, Native Authority system in Nigeria underwent some reforms. This followed provisions of the Macpherson Constitution of 1951 that gave Nigerians a greater access to participate in policy formulation and implementation. During the indirect rule era, Emirs were Sole Native Authority executives. As a result of clarion call for reforms by the educated elites in 1952, the colonial government in Northern Nigeria abrogated the status of the Emirs as Sole Native Authority administrators conferred by the Native Authority Ordinance of 1933. In the Western Region, the reform took place in 1953 when the local government law came into effect. In the Eastern Region, control of local government political units became the

affairs of the elected representatives who made up three quarters of the council membership. At independence and with the military intervention in the politics of Nigeria, more reforms were made in the local government system in Nigeria. This happened in 1966 when local government council members were dissolved.

Akpan (1984) posits that “it is difficult, if not impossible for any state to administer successfully all functions of government through the central organs of the state”. Even communist nations that tried to control all localities of the state centrally met significant resistance and, in many cases, failed. This is perhaps why in 1936, the then USSR officially recognized the need for functions to be performed at local levels with a measure of control by the central organs of the state. This implies that for the central government anywhere to succeed in meeting the yearnings of her citizens there must be a kind of local body or organ familiar with the local needs and problems of the local people.

Local government constitutes the most critical level of government at which the momentum to sustain national development can be created (Bello-Imam, 1996). To some countries in the third world, it is the only semblance of authority known beyond the traditional institution. As a concept and one of the subordinate units in federal political system arrangement, it has attracted definitions of various scholars. Therefore, there is not unanimous agreement between these scholars on the definition of local government. In Nigeria federal system, we have the Federal, State and Local governments. The local government exists within a state. According to Bello et al (2004), Local government can be seen as a sub-organ of the State or central government at the local level. It is seen as the government at the grassroots. They are entities that can sue, be sued and can also enter into contracts. Oladisu (1981) describes local government as the formal governance mechanism with the statutory right to conduct its affairs in accordance with the relevant laws enabling it with little or no inter-position by the other levels of governance of the state. Yusuf and Saleh (1998) describes it as grassroots level with significant governance autonomy to provide and facilitate basic people-oriented services like primary education, primary and rural health care, community development and so on.

Grassroots Development

Development in its simplest definition and perhaps in its common usage can be considered as the objective of moving to a state relatively better than what previously existed: “good change” as defined by Chambers (1997). As change is a process, this definition of development tends to denote a process towards a desirable state in society. Whether this state is achieved in the short or long term, change has several implications for society. Disruption may occur in the established patterns of living within the society as it moves towards *good change*, and thus reflect a contradiction to its intended meaning, and generate a discourse on what constitutes this “good change” (Thomas, 2000).

The most critical reason for the creation of local governments in Nigeria is grassroots development otherwise known as rural development, which embraces a host of economic, social and political activities aimed at improving the standard and living conditions of the rural dwellers. It is a process in which the people are key participants or ought to be key participants in their own development. Grassroots development is also viewed as a self-generating process of socio-economic and political development in which the rural inhabitants themselves are actively involved and share in the cost and benefits of such development. The essential elements of grassroots development include poverty reduction;

rising incomes; increase in health and nutrition status of the people; provision of quantitative and qualitative basic education; improved agricultural activities; provision of infrastructural facilities; amongst others.

Grassroots development is the responsibility of the local government with the active co-operation of the state and federal governments; aimed at improving the welfare of the masses within its areas of jurisdiction. Ibrahim (1980) defined grassroots development (rural development) as the process by which the standard of living at the grassroots level is enhanced politically, socially and economically. This definition views grassroots development as a multi-dimensional process involving important changes in social structures, conditions of life, as well as the involvement of the rural dwellers in decisions that affect their lives. Grassroots development, in this wise, is regarded as an effective strategy of addressing the basic needs of the rural population.

Adegboye (1973) cited in Egwemi and Odo (2013) sees rural or grassroots development as the development of rural people in such a continuous manner as to enable them to effectively and efficiently utilize their intellect, technology and other resources for further development of themselves and others. Grassroots development is a process of bringing improved level of living to the inhabitants with notable and reasonable changes in all ramifications. According to Gana (1990) cited in Egwemi and Odo (2013), grassroots development is the re-structuring of the rural economy in order to grow it from a dependent peasant and largely agricultural economy to one capable of sustaining an improved quality of life at the local level. Whatever, the conceptualization of grassroots development, the bottom-line is that it is about improving the standard and living conditions of the rural people. The thrust of the study is that local governments, having as they do, intimate knowledge of their areas of jurisdiction are most suited to mobilize both human and material resources of the local areas for grassroots development. There are several theoretical windows through the issue of local government and grassroot development can be anchored. While other theories may be right on their own, we underpin this paper on the integrated rural development theory.

Abutu (in Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2003) views the concept of integrated rural development as that of total transformation of the lives of the rural populace. According to him, integrated rural development is “that process of taking deliberate and concrete actions to ensure the positive transformation of the productive forces of the rural populace and the exploitation of rural resources for their common good. Hence it involves the mass mobilization of the rural populace in Policies that affect their lives, modernization of their productive Techniques and abilities and equitable distribution of whatever benefits that result from processes among different families, communities and classes.

Grassroots development as defined by Hall (2015) and some World Bank publications World Bank (2004; 2008; and 2014) is the restructuring of rural economy in order to grow it from dependent peasant and largely agricultural economy to one capable of sustaining an improved quality of life for the local people. Abdulgafar, Ibrahim and Alasinrin (2013) define grassroots development as the process by which the standard of living at the grassroots level is enhanced politically, socially and economically. Similarly, Olofin, Olaniyan and Folawewo (2013) define it as a deliberate effort which empowers people to get out of poverty, improve their living conditions and act as an instrument for social mobilization. Thus, showing that elements of grassroots development include: poverty reduction, rising incomes, increase in health and nutritional status of the people, qualitative

and quantitative basic education, improved agricultural activities and the provision of basic infrastructural facilities among others.

Local Government and Grassroots Development

The local government is seen as government at the grassroots. The connection between local government and grassroots development can be really appreciated through the functions of the local government under the fourth schedule of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. According to Ezeani (2006), local government is generally seen as a veritable agent of development and grassroots participation in the democratic process.

The roles and functions of local government in grass-root development are as follows:

1. Construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces or such public facilities like museum as may be prescribed from time to time by the house of assembly of the state.
2. Naming roads and streets and numbering of houses.
3. Provision and maintenance of public convenience, sewage and refuse disposal.
4. The provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education.
5. The development of agriculture and natural resources other than exploitation of minerals.
6. The provision and maintenance of health service like immunization.
7. Establishment of slaughter house, slaughter slabs, market, motor parks and public conveniences.
8. Mobilization of people for rapid rural development of the grass-roots with special reference to: Self help projects, farm productions Conflict resolution among warring communities.
9. Provision of housing and urban layouts.
10. Provision of electricity
11. Enlightenment service.

In the exercise of the functions conferred under the law, a local government may either by its employees or by dully appointed agents or otherwise for the discharge of such functions.

Empirical Review

Nwobu (2008) did a study on local government administration and service delivery: a comparative analysis of elected and appointed councils in Awka South Local Government Area. The study adopted descriptive survey design and the result showed that the inability of the local government to provide social services to the grassroots was because council's chairmen were answerable to the governor and not the people. Similarly, in a study done by Ezeh and Muanya (2013), it was found that the state government has taken over the functions and revenue yielding sources of the local government through the appointment of caretaker committee in managing the affairs of the councils thereby eroding the autonomy of the local government as the third tier of government in Nigeria. In a related study, Fatile, Fajonyomi and Adejuwon (2017) did an empirical review of state-local government fiscal relations and grassroots development in selected LGAs in Lagos State. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The result showed that revenue allocation modules between and among the three levels of government have attendant problems on grassroots development in Nigeria and also that with proper fiscal responsibility exercised

by those entrusted with public fund, there would be a positive effect on service delivery in the localities. Akani (2017) did a theoretical appraisal of local government administration and grassroots development in Nigeria. The study which was designed as a content analysis found that the object of the 1976 local government reform has become a mirage. The ruling class now sees it as a patrimony to satisfy political allies and cronies through the award of contracts and political appointments. The study concludes that the local government should be development oriented through the application of democratic etiquette and good governance. Adebayo (2014) investigated the issues in local government and the challenges of rural development in Nigeria. The study which adopted content analysis found that non-involvement of the local dwellers in policy decisions and hijack of local government allocations by the state government are some of the reasons that the local governments are not providing the necessary services to their constituent localities. In another study, Okafor, Chukwuemeka and Udenta (2015) investigated a developmental local government as a model for grassroots socio-economic development in Nigeria. The study which adopted content analysis revealed that the abuse of the constitutional provisions and lack of commitment have negatively affected the development of the grassroots in the local government areas in Nigeria. In a related study, Odo (2014) examined the local government and the challenges of grassroots development in Nigeria. The study adopted content analysis and it found that local governments have performed far below expectations in rural/grassroot development. It concludes that despite the poor performance, local government is still best suited to engender development at the local level hence the urgent and compelling need to fix the local government system in order to enhance its service delivery capacity.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts structural functionalism theory as its theoretical framework. In its simplest form, structural-functionalism “sets out to interpret society as a structure with interrelated parts” with each structure performing role function. The failure of one structure leads to dysfunctionality or disorderliness in the system. Structural-functionalists like Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell posited that for proper understanding of the structures (institutions) in the society, there is need to place them in a meaningful and dynamic historical context (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/structural_functionalism).

Situated within the present study, the above postulations have relevant applicability in understanding and analyzing service delivery in Nigerian local governments. Local governments are structures created in Nigeria to perform specific functions that will help bring government closer to the people. As advised by Almond and Powell, historical study of local governments in Nigeria from its traditional forms like the traditional political system, Native Authority and modern local government systems has brought to fore some of the service delivery functions of local governments in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the idea of dysfunctionality or disorderliness advanced by structural functionalists could be used in explaining the incapacity of local governments to deliver services to the people in a timely, adequate and satisfactory manner. As a system consisting of interrelated parts or components, local governments cannot exist in isolations. Put differently, Local Government Councils in Nigeria consist of departments like works, land, survey and housing; agricultural and natural resources; health, education and social services; administration; budget and statistics and treasury. Each of these departments must

interact together to keep the local government moving and effective. Besides, the interactions within the local government milieu, interactions with bodies like the federal government, states, local service commissions, local government councils, rural communities and others must be sustained in an atmosphere of intergovernmental relations aimed at delivering quality service in a timely, satisfactory, honest, effective and transparent manner. To justify the reasons for creating local governments, local government spending, functions performed by local government workers, interactions between and among its component parts, projects executed by local governments should be aimed at “providing the basic services to which each citizen is entitled in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner” (‘Servicom and the citizen’, www.servinigeria.com).

Nigerians have the right to be served right whether at federal, state or local government levels. So, ‘dysfunctionalism’ in the operations of local governments in Nigeria can be corrected through identifying factors that have hampered service delivery and making appropriate prescriptions (recommendations) based on the findings of the study.

Study Location

The capital city of Nigeria, Abuja (/ə'bu:dʒə/), is situated in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) at coordinates 9.0765° N, 7.3986° E in the country's centre. While the majority of the FCT's landmass was taken from Niger State, the majority of it was also taken from the present-day states of Nasarawa (an Old Plateau state) and Kogi (an Old Plateau state). The area of Abuja is 1,769 km². Although Abuja was established as Nigeria's capital on February 3, 1976, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida replaced Lagos, the nation's most populated city, as the capital on December 12, 1991 (President of Nigeria 1985- 1993).

Abuja has been linked to many sized territorial divisions. The town of Abuja is the first established by a man named Abu Ja, a descendant of Zaria's 54th Sarkin (Temple, 1965). 13 miles south of Izom, the town—named for its founder—was situated next to a River Ikutributary. The Abuja emirate's territory towards the end of the 19th century was substantially larger than what the local authorities had drawn when they met Lugard in 1904 (Hassan & Na'ibi, 1952). Examining the Federal Capital Territory's schedule, we see that Abuja is significantly bigger than the former Abuja town, which belongs within the Federal Capital Territory, and smaller than the Abuja Emirate during the height of the territory's growth on the outskirts of the new Federal capital territory (FCDA, 1979).

The Federal Capital Territory is administered by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) and the FCT Minister is the political administrator of the capital appointed by the President. There are six area councils in the FCT namely: Abuja Municipal Area Council, Abaji, Bwari, Gwagwada, Kwali and Kure area councils. The area councils are administered by an Executive chairman elected through popular suffrage. He is the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the council. He disburses public funds and renders monthly statement of income, expenditure and annual reports to the council. The Vice-Chairman of the council is also elected through popular suffrage, he acts for the chairman in absence. The Legislative arm of the area council is composed of the leader of the council and other councilors. It debates and approves or amends annual budget of the area council, venting and monitoring the implementation of projects amongst other functions.

The Council Secretary is appointed by the Council Chairman and serves as the secretary of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the council and also keeps the records. The

councilors are elected into office and administer the wards of the area council. The Head of Personnel Management Department deals with staffs' performance, their welfare and it is focus on policies. The Works department oversees projects execution in the area council, the council treasurer acts as an information and reference point for the Chairman and other committee members: clarifying financial implications of proposals; confirming legal requirements; outlining the current financial status of the area council etc.

The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for developing internal audit policies, rules, standards, review and appraise budget planning and implementation with a view to promoting the council's goals and objectives. The Head of Environmental Sanitation oversees the compliance of council's decisions on clean and healthy environments. The Head of Primary Health is saddled with the responsibility of maintaining and overseeing of council's clinic – distribution of drugs and other health facilities in the council. The Head of Agricultural Department is in-charge of the distribution of fertilizers, seeds etc to the farmers either on loan or free as a way of the council's policy of eradicating food insecurity. The Head of Education and Special Duties is responsible oversees the distribution of learning materials to schools within the council, provision of scholarships to brilliant indigent students of the area council.

Some of the Key Rural Projects Executed in Gwagwalada, Kuje and Kwali Area Councils of FCT

The following tables below constitute some of the key capital projects executed by successive area councils in partnership with donors from 2010 – 2024:

Rural Electrification

S/N	Project Name	Benefiting Communities
I	Installation of relieve 250KVA Transformer	Phase 1, Gwagwalada
ii	On-going Electrification Project	Giri Village, Gwagwalada
iii	Electrification project	Angwan-Dodo, Gwagwalada
v	Installation of 500/11 KVA Village Electrification Project	Paiko, Gwagwalada
v	Installation of 500/11 KVA Transformer	Stadium lay-out, Gwagwalada
vi	Extension of Electricity	Tungan-Maje Village, Gwagwalada
vii	Installation of relieve 500/11 KVA Transformer	Kuje
viii	Extension of Electricity	Paikan-Kore Village, Gwagwalada
ix	Extension of Rural electrification	Paiko/Ibwa
x	Biogas electricity	Rije and Kuyizhi, Kure
xi	Mini-grid power plants	Petti village, Kwali
xii	Street Light (Solar powered)	Several communities across selected area councils in FCT

Source: Research Compilation (2024)

Housing/Roads/Bridges/Culverts

S/N	Project Name	Benefiting Communities
i.	Road Rehabilitation	Anagada Community, Gwagwalada
ii	Road Rehabilitation	Dagiri, Gwagwalada
iii	Construction of Road	Ibwa, Gwagwalada
iv	Rehabilitation of Abattoir Brigde	Kutunku, Gwagwalada
v.	Construction of FRCN Road	Kutunku, Gwagwalada
vi.	Sport and Civic centre	Kaida, Gwagwalada
vii	Culvert construction	Godoji, Kuje
viii	Construction of roads	Anguwar and Damakusa, Kuje
ix	Construction of Borehole and drainage	Robochi, Kwali
x	60-Meter bridge construction	Jeida, Gbesan, Kure

Source: Research Compilation (2024)

C. Health Facilities

S/N	Project Name	Benefiting Communities
i.	Building of Primary Health Clinic	Angwan Dodo, Gwagwalada
ii.	Renovation and Fencing of Primary Health Clinic	Gwako Village, Gwagwalada
iii.	Building of Health Centre	Zuba, Gwagwalada
iv.	Fencing and Landscaping of Health Centre	Tunga-Maje, Gwagwalada
v.	Provision of health care centre	Paikon-Kore, Gwagwalada
vi.	Renovation of Primary Health Care Centre	Kuje

Source: Research Compilation (2024)

Economic Empowerment

S/N	Bursary Award	Benefiting Communities
i.	Bursary Awards	Indigents undergraduates of Gwagwalada
ii.	Organizing Skills Acquisition Programmes	Dobi and Pagada
iii	Micro credit empowerment scheme	Students and Market women in Kuje and Kwali

Source: Research Compilation (2024)

Education

S/N	Project Name	Benefiting Communities
i.	Building of UBE Primary school	Kutunku
ii.	Construction of one block of two classroom UBE Primary school	Kutunku
iii	Provision of new desks, chairs and newly constructed classrooms for LEA school	Pagada 2
iv.	Block of two classrooms and a head teacher office, Ventilated improved pit toilet	Dako

Source: Research Compilation (2024)

Motor Parks

S/N	Project Name	Benefiting Communities
i.	Construction of Modern Motor Park	Dobi

Source: Research Compilation (2024)

Agriculture

S/N	Project Name	Benefiting Communities
i.	Procurement of Tractors for Agriculture services	Kuje
ii.	Provision of fertilizers to rural farmers at subsidized rate	Gawagwala

Source: Research Compilation (2024)

Water Supply

S/N	Project Name	Benefiting Communities
i.	Provision of Water Overhead Tank	Zuba
ii.	Provision of Water Overhead Tank	Ikwa
iii.	Overhead Water Tank	Tsauni Village
iv.	Installation of Council Secretariat Overhead Water Tank	Council Secretariat
v.	Solar Energy-Power Water Supply Scheme	Tungan-Maje
vi.	Water Scheme	Dobi

Source: Research Compilation (2024)

Despite all these projects undertaken by successive administration, many rural communities lack basic social and economic infrastructures. Residents in area councils have been complaining of some the projects dilapidated state and the inability of the area councils to critically proffer solutions to salvaging these ailing projects or implementing new projects (Abubakar, 2014).

Methodology

This study utilized both primary and secondary data. The primary data consisted of structured online survey questionnaire administered to selected residents of Gwagwalada, Kuje and Kwali area councils of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja-Nigeria. The questionnaire was drafted in a simple worded format for residents to understand the subject of research and also to enable them provide answers. The estimated population of FCT is placed at 3,067,500 and a sample size of 400 using Taro Yarmane formula for determining sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where:

n= Calculated sample size,

N = The study population size which is the number of populations of FCT (3067500).

e = The acceptable sampling error shall be 5% assumed.

Thus:

$$\frac{n}{1 + 3067500 \times (0.05)^2} = \frac{3067500}{1 + 3067500 \times (0.05)^2}$$

n = 400.

The researcher adopted simple random sampling to distribute the questionnaire to residents of three area councils namely, Gwagwalada, Kuje and Kwali. The reasons for selecting

these three area councils is because many rural areas are found in these places and the study sought to identify local capital projects and their impact on rural development. Data generated through the questionnaire were arranged in tables and analyzed using simple percentage and mean average.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were distributed local residents in selected area councils in FCT, Abuja. However, only 387 copies were properly filled and submitted to the researcher. Therefore, the analysis was based on the 387 retrieved by the researcher. The table 1 below shows the response rate of the distributed copies of questionnaire:

Table 1: Response Rate of Administered Questionnaire

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Wrongly Filled	13	3.2	3.2	3.2
Accurately filled	387	96.8	96.8	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (October, 2024).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Level of satisfaction of residents as regards rural development projects executed in FCT, Abuja

Items	Sample Size	Mean	Decision
I am fully aware of key projects executed by area council administration where I reside	387	3.4	Not Sure
Local projects are always borne out of the need to enhance rural development	387	3.1	Not Sure
I am satisfied with the economic empowerment projects executed in my local area	387	1.8	Rejected
I am very satisfied with the roads, culvert or bridges constructed in my local area	387	1.9	Rejected
Local population have been able to access quality health care services	387	2.0	Rejected
Educational projects executed in my local area by the government and donors have been satisfactory	387	2.4	Rejected
I am always satisfied with the approach area council execute developmental projects	387	2.7	Rejected
Grand Mean = 2.4 (Rejected)			

Source: Computed Data (SPSS Version 23).

Table 2 displayed the responses of respondents on the level of satisfaction towards rural developmental projects executed in selected area councils in FCT, Abuja. From the result,

there was no consensus on whether local residents are fully aware of key projects executed by area councils' administration where they reside as revealed by the mean score of 3.4 (Not Sure). The mean score of 3.1 (Not Sure) indicated that there was no consensus on the issue on whether local projects are always borne out of the need enhance rural development. Majority of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the economic empowerment projects in their local areas as shown by the mean score of 1.8 (Rejected). Majority of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the kind of roads, culvert or bridges projects executed by the area council's administration as this is shown by the mean score of 1.9 (Rejected). The mean score of 2.0 (Rejected) clearly show that majority of the respondents are not satisfied with the health care service delivery in their local areas. Educational projects executed in my local area by the government and their partners have not been very satisfactory as revealed by the mean score of 2.4 (Rejected). Majority of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the approach area council execute developmental projects as shown by the mean score of 2.7 (Rejected). The overall mean result of 2.4 (Rejected) clearly showed that majority of the local residents are not satisfied with the local projects executed in the selected area councils within the Federal Capital Territory.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of factors affecting project execution in the area councils in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Items	Sample Size	Mean	Decision
Poor project conception	387	4.6	Accepted
Poor planning	387	4.3	Accepted
Misappropriation of funds	387	4.5	Accepted
Inadequate monitoring and evaluation	387	4.1	Accepted
Inadequate project management experts	387	3.3	Not Sure
Delay in the release of project funds	387	4.0	Accepted
Use or purchase of substandard materials	387	3.4	Not Sure
Poor Funding and Revenue generation base	387	3.5	Not Sure
Poor collaboration with non-governmental organisations and other foreign donors project	387	4.0	Accepted
Awareness of the projects executed and their benefits to improving rural development	387	4.3	Accepted
Grand Mean = 4.0 (Accepted)			

Source: Computed Data (SPSS Version 23).

Table 3 displayed the descriptive statistics of factors affecting project execution in the area councils in FCT, Abuja. Factors such as poor project conception, poor planning, misappropriation of funds, inadequate monitoring and evaluation of projects and delay in the release of funds and poor collaboration with non-governmental organisations, other foreign donors project and awareness of the projects executed and their benefits to improving rural development significantly affect project execution as shown in their respective mean scores of 4.6, 4.3, 4.5, 4.1, 4.0, 4.0 and 4.3. There were no consensus on whether inadequate project experts, use or purchase of substandard materials and poor funding and revenue base affect project execution as revealed in their respective mean scores of 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5. The overall mean score of 4.0 (Accepted) clearly indicated that these highlighted factors have significantly influence on project execution in the selected area councils of FCT, Abuja.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed area councils were not effective in driving grassroots development due to the dissatisfaction expressed by the local residents. Local government is the closet tier of government to the people in Nigeria, yet the local population has been denied the benefits of its existence. Despite the efforts made by area councils administration in FCT, there are still many social infrastructures in dilapidated form. Local residents are dissatisfied with the roads, culvert and other physical infrastructures to enhance development. These findings corroborated with that of Olusola (2011) who posited that educational and health care facilities have been in shambles and inadequate in the local government area. Developmental projects are actually completed on time, but the study reveals that they are inadequate to cater for the needs of the rural dwellers. The study findings revealed that there are factors affecting project execution and improvement of rural development. From the findings of the study, poor project conception and poor planning significantly affect project execution and the enhancement of rural development. These findings collaborated with that of Akande (2018) and Nweze (2016) revealed that many developmental projects in Nigeria have failed because of inadequate plan conception. Besides, shortage of project management experts and delay in release of project execution funds to resulted to poor service delivery on the part of area councils. According to Onah (2002), the problems of efficient personnel has affected the performance of many local government areas. Onah (2002) pointed at political interference from the states and the influence of ethnicity, favoritisms and nepotism which is shown in the way projects are allocated and executed. The local government councils have a number of functions to perform within their area of jurisdiction. It ranges from economic to social functions. Performing these functions in themselves can be employment generating". But unfortunately, most local government are lagging behind in performing their functions. Because employees are not always getting the desired professional personnel management to effectively utilize them. One of the functions of the local government is to enhance the socio-economic life of its citizens. According to the findings from the study, it was revealed that many residents complained that area councils have not much in terms of creating economic empowerment schemes (job opportunities and in the area of vocational skills acquisition programme) to empower the youths economically. Every organization needs training to empower their employees to understand the objectives and goals of their organization and to function effectively. The study findings revealed that there is a

disconnect between the local residents of the area councils and projects being executed. This disconnect is caused by the irregular dissatisfaction of the rural dwellers. Local government has not really facilitated rapid development at the grassroots, which is the essence of their creation (Amaechi, 2012). This statement corroborated with the findings of the study that area councils has been underperforming because of inadequate funds. Funds needed to carry out huge development projects are not usually available. The capacity to harness the natural resource in the local government is inadequate and this has affected the amount of funds to the local government. The allocation of Federation Account is not enough to carry out developmental projects in all the political wards of the local government. The collaboration of partnership of area councils with other organisations providing social services is poor according to the findings from the analysis. There are several social service providers such as Non-Governmental Organisations who are ready to provide free health care services, skills acquisition trainings and other services.

Conclusion and recommendations

The invaluable role of the local government is anchored on the attendant development it brings nearer to the people. The local people have the right to good governance by benefitting from developmental projects executed by their local leaders. The study concludes that residents in the selected area councils in FCT are not adequately satisfied with the execution of developmental projects. Some of the reasons for their dissatisfaction include poor execution of educational, health care services, poor road construction and the approach adopted by the area councils to executing developmental projects. Also, significant factors have contributed to the execution of projects in FCT and some of these include poor project conception, poor planning, inadequate project experts and poor collaboration with non-governmental organisations and other foreign donors to execute projects. In improving project execution and rural development in the Federal Capital Territory, adequate measures such as proper project conception, adequate and comprehensive project planning, involvement of project management experts, prompt release of project funds, efficient collaboration with non-governmental organisations and foreign donors, improved funding and revenue generation base as well as creating awareness using social media on the projects executed and their benefits to improving rural development.

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