

**AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
INTERNATIONAL AIDS IN THE NIGER DELTA RURAL COMMUNITIES****Jackson Akpojaro***

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examine the key factors inhibiting effective delivery of international donor-aided interventions in the Niger Delta rural communities from the beneficiaries. We review current intervention issues and challenges with a view to recommending deliberate steps towards ensuring effectiveness in implementation. This study captures survey data from 70 randomly selected rural projects located in the Niger Delta region. The simple percentages, Analysis of Variance and Chi-Square were used in the statistical analysis to predict factors challenging intervention effectiveness by measures of: human capacity deficiency, defective delivery framework, corruption, environmental, policy, and funding problems. The research result identifies defective delivery framework as the most inhibiting factor against effective use of aid in rural communities. Other critical factors in their descending order of gravity include funding, corruption, human capacity, policy and environmental problems. Stakeholders should take urgent steps towards dealing with these factors which inhibit effective intervention delivery through beneficiary-based intervention framework, frantic war against corrupt practices, integration of monitoring and evaluation units (MEU) of local governments, alignment of interventions to national development plan, maintenance of intervention databases to reduce duplication of efforts, and establishment of aid management offices (AMOs) at all levels of government. Therefore, this paper is relevant and of interest to international donor agencies, researchers, policy makers, beneficiaries and other stakeholders of sustainable rural development.

Keywords: Aid, donor, beneficiary, intervention, projects, rural development, Niger Delta

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's economic under-performance despite huge resource endowment continues to attract private, public and international attention in terms of financial, technical and collaborative aid since independence in 1960. International aid is colloquially understood as any form of economic, technical, military assistance given by one nation to another for reason of rehabilitation, relief, economic stabilization, or mutual defense explains that aid involves direct or indirect funding for goods and services at cheaper rate than market price with complementary assistance from an external source (Ofunya, 2013; Akon, 2012). International community places premium on donor-aided interventions because of huge transformational opportunities associated with effective utilization of such aid. Strategies aimed at reducing poverty and stimulating sustainable growth in rural communities need be strengthened for increased visibility of the developmental outcomes. The challenges of ineffective application of donor-aided interventions and economic leadership manifest through alienation of beneficiaries from intervention implementation process, clash of interest, poor articulation of policies, programs and alignment of intervention objectives to national plan, poor project design, inadequate monitoring aided interventions and resultant under-development and indebtedness (Mosley and Marion, 2000; Adama, 2012).

It is pertinent to observe that the dynamics of the huge international interventions in the rural communities are yet to yield desired transformational experience. The poor performance of these interventions is attributed to inherent defects of donor and beneficiary environments such as lack of accountability and transparency

(Idumange, 2011, O'Connel and Soludo, 2001), unreliable feedback mechanism (Martens et al., 2001), poor supporting information infrastructure (Dehn, 2003), multiple and competing intervention objectives and associated trade-offs (Ofunya, 2013), and inefficient implementation framework that is donor-based, inherent disparity between donor and beneficiary notions (experiential, social, technical, developmental, and technological), institutionalized corruption, inadequate intervention leadership, poor understanding of knowledge economy dynamics and maintenance culture (Lucey, 2005; Richardson, 2010).

PROBLEM OF THE STATEMENT

Foreign aid has become a major component of transformational strategy for most developing countries in Africa, including Nigeria. It is important to note that there abound evidences of high unemployment, crippling poverty, and very low indices of overall growth for countries that benefit from such donor-aided interventions. The marginal growth recorded has inspired numerous studies (Adedeji, 2001; Obannaya, 2011, Oluwatonyi, 2012; Round and Odedokun, 2003) on the impact and extent of usefulness of such interventions. Sadly, such studies have been scholarly rather than experiential and explain the difficulty in developing a universally acceptable framework for efficient application of international donor interventions. It is pertinent to observe that there exists a dangerous trend in which governments substitute donor interventions as major mechanism for national development. In view of the challenges and poor performance of interventions in rural communities in the Niger Delta despite the huge international aid; does a correlation exist? In other words, are there any significant transformational experiences in the rural communities in Nigeria related to the huge international aid committed by different donor agencies? What are the factors, if any, affecting the effectiveness of interventions in rural Nigeria and in what order of gravity? These are the problems this work seeks to address.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This paper aims at investigating the factors affecting the effectiveness of international donor-aided interventions in rural communities of Niger Delta region. The study provides detailed information about the internal and external obstacles challenging effectiveness of aid. Identifying the key factors as well as recommending a workable framework from the beneficiary perspective that is of interest to donor agencies, scholars, national policy makers, and other stakeholders for sustainable rural development.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The following specific objectives formed basis for this investigation, approaching subject matter from experiential point of view:

- i) To determine the extent to which donor-aided interventions have affected the rural dwellers in the Niger Delta region
- ii) To identify obstacles affecting effective delivery of interventions according to their order of their gravity
- iii) To review intervention practices in order to formulate sound framework for effectiveness of donor interventions.

RELATED WORK

There are numerous studies that discuss effectiveness of international donor interventions in developed and developing countries (Ofunya, 2013; Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen; 2003; Brautigam, 2000; Azam et.al., 2002; Acharya et al., 2003; Stephen K and Aminur R, 2004; Idumange, 2013) in their study of impact of donor fragmentation on quality of government bureaucracy in aid recipient nations observed that effectiveness of aid is undermined by the practice of donors putting forth their own commercial and security objectives ahead of expected aid benefit on recipients. A World Bank report reveals that some donors engage in harmful practice of poaching best human resources for intervention success, undermining beneficiary's policy structure and capacity development (World Bank, 2011). Easterly (2003) posited that success of donor-aided intervention can only be sustained in poor policy environment through the integration of such into other donor-sponsored or government projects. This assertion underscores the need in encouraging healthy policy-driven environment for sustainable development. Van de Walle (1991) also remarked that in Africa, interventions involve numerous official donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) across thousands of projects and hundreds of overseas experts. In efforts to make interventions visible and associated with donor's activities, developmental essence of the aid is compromised. It is pertinent to observe that countries with single donor presence experience effectiveness of aid than those with multi-donor formation. This is true for developing countries like Botswana in which there is a dominant donor presence with associated advantages of fewer reports and oversight duties, targeted efforts and resource optimization, reduction in intervention duplicity, discouragement in poaching of skilled personnel from host nations, effective monitoring, and better shield from inherent anti-developmental practices.

Developed countries started providing developmental interventions in Nigeria shortly after independence in 1960. These interventions were technical, educational, financial, legal, legislative, military and cultural. During this period, colonial masters and others who had interest in vast natural and human resources endowment encouraged industrial development, adoption of innovative practices, security of their investments and interests, political stability as well as enhancement of collaborations. After the Nigerian civil war in the 70s, the emphasis on donor interventions shifted to development of the rural communities. The gross economic mismanagement and lack of visionary leadership of military dictatorships caused institutionalized corruption, infrastructural deficit, and favoured overly dependence on oil industry at the expense of developing other viable sectors. During this era of economic crisis, marked by debt burden and under-development, donor interventions shifted to poverty alleviation. Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 attracted debt forgiveness, paved way for renewed developmental efforts and economic reconstruction, and lifted barriers to collaboration with enormous potentials. It is vital to note that aid modalities changed with emphasis on socio-economic health of household through relevant donor/government partnerships aimed at alleviating poverty such as family support, planned parenthood, youth empowerment, trade incentives, SMEs development, infrastructural upgrade, and skill acquisitions among others.

Nigeria shows that it ranks globally 6th and 8th in gas and crude oil reserves, with 37 solid minerals at commercial quantities and has an estimated population of 150 million persons (Sanusi, 2010). In past two decades, Nigeria has experienced increase in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which stands at US\$140 billion in 2007 and a GDP per capita of over US\$1,000. Growth indices reveal that despite its population, huge endowment and donor-aided interventions, it is classified amongst the poorest nations in the world. World Bank (2013) reports that poverty rate in Nigeria has remained high especially in rural settlements despite the observed economic growth trends. The African Development Bank in its 2013 annual report indicated that people below the national poverty line has increased by 3.5% over four years and puts poverty in rural areas at 73.2 per cent and in urban area at 61.8 per cent. National Bureau of Statistics (2012), reports that 112.5 million Nigerians live in poverty. World Bank (2014) reports that Nigeria ranks third in global poverty index and the bias of poverty is to the rural settlements with higher than national average. It was contended that the capacities of developing nations to optimize foreign development aid are contingent upon aided self-help community cooperation (Obi, 2009; Nwogwugwu et al, 2012; Adati, 2012).

In the Niger Delta communities, like the rest of communities in other regions, agriculture sustains livelihood and provides employment more than cumulative contributions of other sectors. With dwindling fortunes in the rural areas, successive governments have implemented reforms in collaboration with international donors in stimulating rural development. Such laudable and far-reaching policy is the National Empowerment and Economic Development Strategy (NEEDS) with goals such as: poverty alleviation, wealth creation, employment generation through people's empowerment, private-driven development and improved governance at all levels. Major donors provide complementary assistance to the government in effort for better lives for the poor rural dwellers. For instance, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has statutory mandate to assist the poor rural people to grow and sell more food, increase their financial fortunes and determine direction of their lives. Other key donors and supported rural development programmes include European Union (EU), European Union Micro Project Programme (EU- MPP), World Bank, UNDP, the British Department for International Development (DFID), the United States Department for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Rural Financial Institutions (RUFIN) programme, UNICEF/WHO health programmes, World Bank Health Systems Development Projects among others. Niger Delta is a region benefiting from increased inflow and expanded efforts of these donors and/or collaboratively funded activities. It is observed that despite the community-based approach and huge complementary development assistance, the lives of rural dwellers in the Niger Delta region remain unchanged.

Despite studies on aid in developing countries, it is hard to answer the questions: does aid accelerate rural development? What is the motivation of the aid giver and to whom and for what reason? Answers to such questions continue to elude us despite research efforts. Aspects to these question are: severe lack of focus on purpose, accountability issues, poor communication on aid results, defective parameters for aid budgeting, preference for urban to rural development, poor developmental policies of aid recipients, conflicting intrinsic and extrinsic donor aid objectives, aid discussion from donor perspective among others. The unanswered questions inspired pressure from civil societies and aid critics that led to the Paris declaration on Aid effectiveness. This declaration demands acceptable implementation frameworks that will deliver expected transformations for developmental efforts. It is against this background that this study considers the factors affecting effectiveness of interventions in the Niger Delta from an experiential (beneficiary's) point of view.

AIDS AS STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OPTION IN NIGER DELTA COMMUNITIES

Niger Delta region is proverbially the ‘goose that lays the golden egg.’ The Nigerian economy is heavy dependent on crude oil in this region for exports, accounting for over 95% of the country’s foreign exchange earnings (CBN, 2010). Yet, this region had been neglected from independence in 1960 and sparked widespread condemnations from international, regional, civil rights organizations and other interest groups in the 80s. During this era, successive ‘military juntas,’ devoid of visionary leadership and good governance principles, under developed this region through infrastructural deficit, unemployment, institutionalized corruption, environmental degradation, suppressed self-determination, resource mismanagement, oppressed and executed the few regional elites like Ken Saro-Wiwa and other ten Ogonis. Government officials engaged in oil bunkering, hijacked and diverted foreign aids, perpetrated anti-developmental policies and created humanitarian situations like the Jesse fire outbreak in Delta State. The foregoing, complicated by social responsibility deficit on part of multinational companies, led to the restiveness within the region since the 80s and 90s.

It is pertinent to observe that before Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999, very little was known about aids and associated developmental outcomes within the region. Newsom (n.d) remarked that Nigeria and donor partners have not articulated the challenges of the region and explains why they are not investing much in development of the rural communities. The amnesty granted to the regional militia as laudable as it is, did not fully consider value of peaceful Niger Delta to economic as well as developmental wellbeing of Nigeria. Thus, the decades of poor economic investment, militarization and instability of the region continue to tragically make aid a strategic developmental option. Donor activities should therefore complement good governance via aid for rural development and socio-economic betterment of the rural people.

Table 1. Composition of Nigerian Exports

| Component | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Oil Exports | 97.5 | 98.3 | 97.8 | 97.9 | 99.0 | 95.8 |
| Total Non Oil Export | 2.5 | 1.7 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 1.0 | 4.2 |
| Non oil | | | | | | |
| Agric | 33.0 | 41.9 | 37.8 | 39.7 | 58.3 | 46.9 |
| Minerals | 2.0 | 4.0 | 8.5 | 6.3 | 7.7 | 6.7 |
| Semi-Manufactured | 48.9 | 40.6 | 37.9 | 39.4 | 17.0 | 29.2 |
| Manufactured | 5.0 | 9.8 | 11.1 | 10.3 | 8.7 | 9.1 |
| Other Exports | 11.2 | 3.9 | 4.7 | 4.3 | 8.3 | 8.1 |

Source: CBN Annual Report and Statement of Account Various Issues.

There are increased awareness and collaborative efforts among stakeholders on the need for accelerated development of this region. For instance, European Union’s Micro Project Programme (EU-MPP) phased implementation has facilitated rural development in the Niger Delta region. EU is the largest contributor to international development funding, amounting to 25 billion Euros in 2006 and financing UN critical agencies while focusing on poverty alleviation and sustainable development (Gettu, 2006). Some donor aided projects in Niger Delta region sighted during observational visits include;

- Health (Roll back malaria initiative, Immunization, AIDs intervention, Maternal/Child care, Planned Parenthood)
- Agricultural (oil mill, cassava processing, improved breeding, demonstration centres)
- Capacity Building (skills acquisition, ICT centres, Impact assessments, and training)
- Educational (classroom blocks renovations, desks, tables, books, scholarships, and universal basic education (UBE) programme interventions)
- Infrastructural development and renovations (roads, bridges, electricity, solar power, markets, portable water)

PARTNERSHIP IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Partnership is a key component in development that ensures the optimal utilization of pooled resources for developmental gain. Gettu (2006) remarked that partnership enhances organizational efficiency and competitiveness in service delivery. It is pertinent to observe that partnership leverages on collective strengths, shared goals and fosters consolidation of developmental efforts. The success of this desirable state of interaction between stakeholders depends on factors such as shared vision, openness, mutual respect and trust, efficient feedback mechanism and desire for best outcome. The current experience in the implementation of aid in the Niger Delta region is one that has a lot to be desired. The beneficiaries are almost excluded from implementation cycle and partly the reason for ineffectiveness in donor aided interventions. Figure 1 shows a framework for international development partnership.

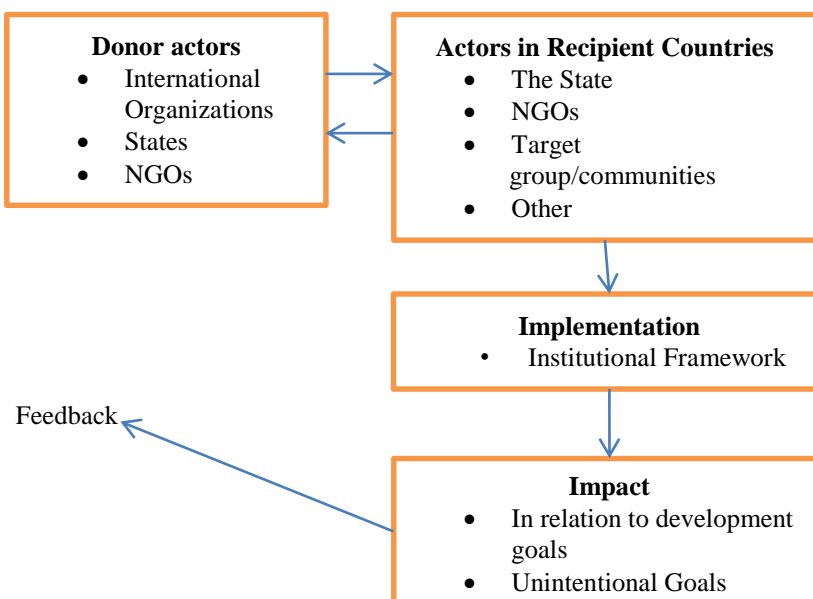
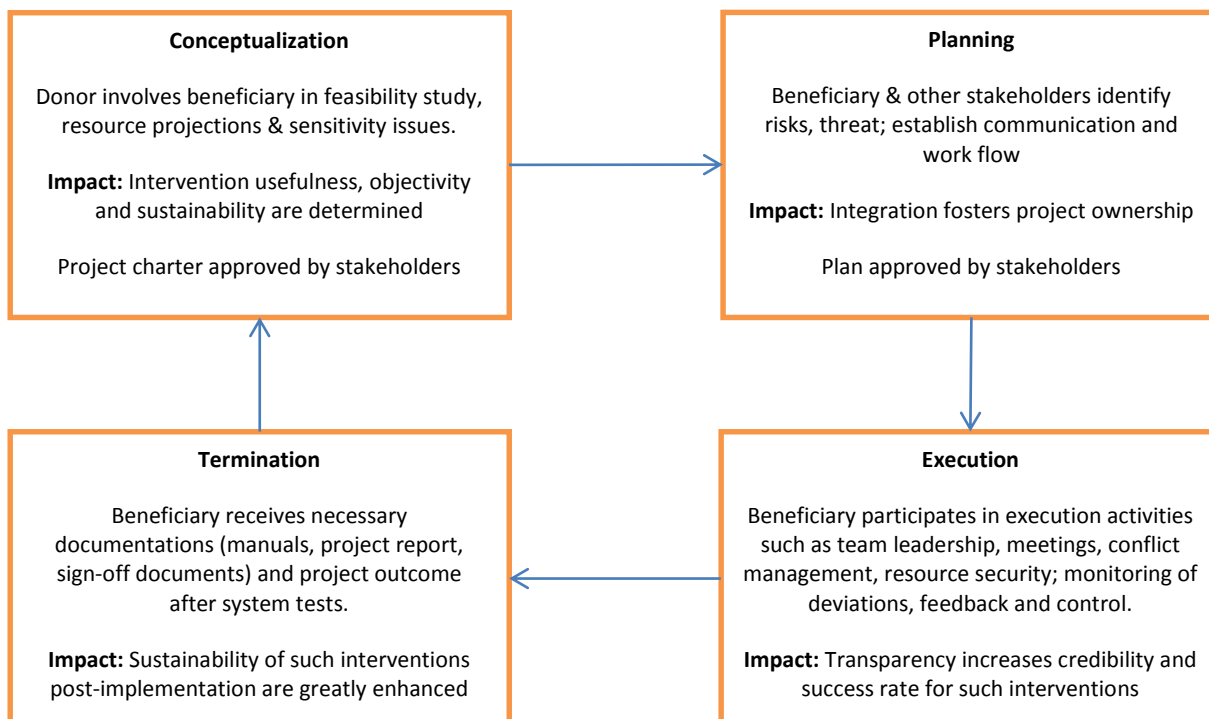


Figure 1. Framework for International Development Partnership

Source: Adapted from Okon (2012) citing John & Paul (2003)

The researcher proposes an implementation framework that is beneficiary-based. This proposal is consistent with field study observations. Most rural dwellers are simply spectators, knowing little about intrinsic value of aided projects and consider such with “their thing” mentality. A project- cycle- like framework in which beneficiaries are key players is proposed as a means of:

- determining usefulness of aid, long and short-run implications of project and sustainability post-implementation
- inculcating the project ownership mentality into the recipients who ultimately use project outcome
- increasing credibility, transparency, accountability and visibility of developmental efforts
- assuring sustainability of developmental efforts post-implementation.



Beneficiary-based Intervention Framework for Rural Communities

Figure 2: Beneficiary-based Implementation Framework (Institutional Framework)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were answered in the course of this empirical study:

- i) Is there a correlation between accelerated rural development and effective donor intervention?
- ii) What are the factors affecting effective donor-aided interventions in their order of intensity?

Research Model

A research specification for this study was developed from preliminary survey outcomes and extensive review of the literature and is composed of the following factors hypothesized to affect effectiveness of donor interventions: Defective delivery framework, funding problem, human capacity deficiency, environmental problem, corruption and policy problem.

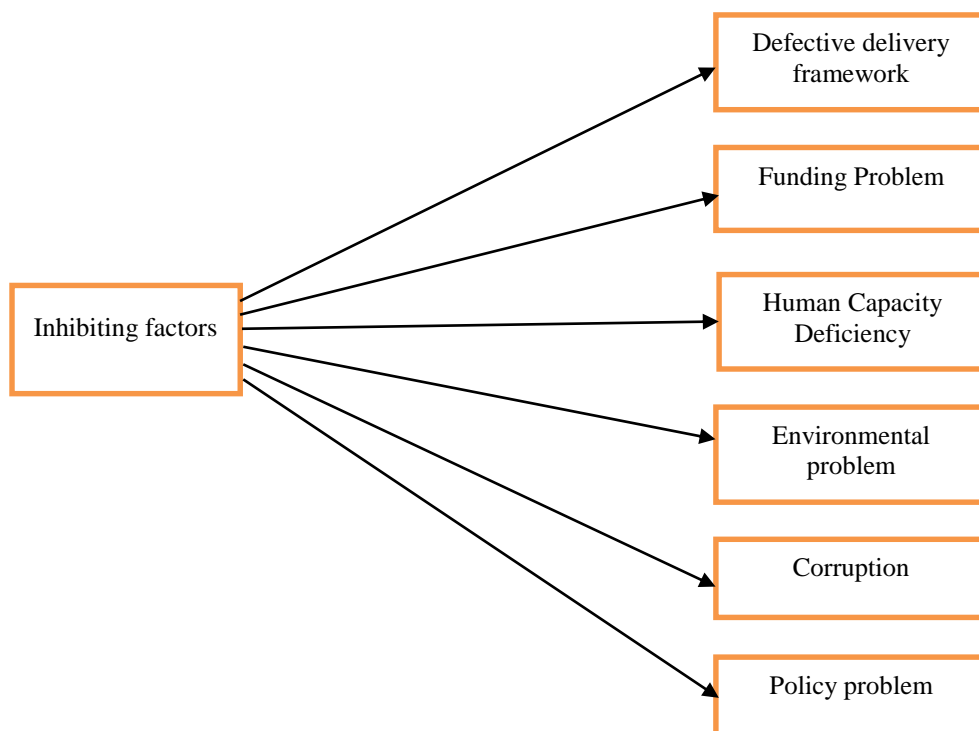


Figure 3: Research model for effective intervention inhibitors

METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted in this study is the survey research technique. This method is adopted since it is not possible to interview the entire targeted population. Population is defined as class of entities with similar characteristics (Zikmund, 2003), and target population for this research includes all international donor-aided interventions within the Niger Delta region. From the target population, sample of 70 projects scattered within the rural communities of the seven constituent states of the research environment were drawn. The detailed questionnaire for this quantitative research was designed to answer the questions raised in the problem statement. It employed open-ended, forced choice questions and personal interviews as primary data source, while previous research work and study of the relevant literature provided secondary data. We strengthened our beneficiary-based investigation by largely administering questionnaires to respondents with intervention experiences within their locality. A total of 700 questionnaires, at an average of ten per intervention, were administered in the course of this investigation.

The constructed instrument was based on five-point Likert scale where '1' is strongly agree and '5' is strongly disagree. In course of preliminary survey, respondents expressed same opinion using numerous phrases. For the purpose of convenience and clarity, we grouped identified factors affecting effectiveness of donor-aided intervention into six as follows:

(i) Defective Delivery Framework

This relates to issues such as exclusion of beneficiary from strategic process, lack of intervention outcome ownership, post-intervention lapses, poor feedback mechanism, interface issues, embedded conflict of interests, and alignment of intervention objectives to sponsor's goals.

(ii) Funding Problem

Funding problem relates to insufficient funding and untimely fund disbursements, poor accounting and audit practices, as well as other fund-related issues.

(iii) Human Capacity Deficiency

This refers to hindrances associated with personnel calibre, resource mismanagement, poor knowledge and leadership, lack of requisite training and skills, illiteracy as well as entitlement mentality of some aid recipients.

(iv) Environmental problem

Among environmental issues are disruptive attention and activities of locals, government agencies, law enforcements, and general insecurity. It also includes topography, socio-cultural & religious biases, and anti-developmental prejudices.

(v) Corruption

This refers to dishonest practices inimical to intervention delivery, rural development and social civility such as extortions, extra-judicial actions, fraud, forced representation, intervention diversions, bribery, over invoicing, over stocking, supply & use of sub-standard items, and other forms of compromise.

(vi) Policy Problem

This problem set includes challenged economic policies, bureaucratic bottlenecks, unavailability of supporting ICT policies, lack of taxation/levies exemptions, multiple clearance and permits, inhibitive policies on innovation transfers, institutionalized inefficiencies, foreign exchange fluctuations, rivalry among tiers of government on monitoring/control, infrastructural deficit and lack of well articulated developmental plans.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Seven hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered with respect to 70 randomly selected community-based interventions, 560 responses were retrieved at a response rate of 80%. This outcome is reasonable considering the constraints of time, huge cost, inherent prejudices towards donor activities and expansive research environment.

Key Survey Results:

Table 2: This shows a survey response to ‘There is a correlation between accelerated rural development and effective international donor-aided interventions.’

| Description | Code | Frequency | Percentage % | Cumulative Percent % |
|-------------------|------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|
| Correlation | | | | |
| Strongly agree | 1 | 21 | 3.75 | 3.75 |
| Agree | 2 | 437 | 78.04 | 81.79 |
| Undecided | 3 | 14 | 2.5 | 84.29 |
| Disagree | 4 | 54 | 9.64 | 93.93 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 34 | 6.07 | 100 |
| Total | | 560 | 100 | |

Source: Field Survey, 2014

In Table 2, it was indicated that 21 respondents representing 3.75% of the sample size strongly agreed, 437 respondents representing 78.04% agreed, 14 respondents representing 2.5% were undecided, 54 respondents representing 9.64% of sample disagreed with proposition and 34 respondents representing 6.07% strongly disagreed. Hence, the majority (81.79%) of the respondents agreed that effective donor-aided intervention will accelerate rural development.

Table 3: This shows a survey response to ‘kindly grade factors affecting effectiveness of international donor-aided interventions according to descending order of impact. Assign one (1) to highest impact and six (6) to the least impact.’

| Inhibiting Factor | Sample Size | Mean | Minimum Ranking | Maximum Ranking |
|------------------------------|-------------|------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Defective Delivery Framework | 560 | 1.78 | 1 | 4 |
| Funding Problem | 560 | 2.28 | 1 | 6 |
| Corruption | 560 | 2.77 | 1 | 6 |
| Human Capacity Deficiency | 560 | 2.86 | 1 | 6 |
| Policy Problem | 560 | 3.12 | 1 | 6 |
| Environmental Problem | 560 | 3.68 | 1 | 6 |

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 3 presents the most crucial distribution of this study. It shows the six identified factors affecting effective donor-aided intervention in Niger Delta rural communities with associated impact ranking. Defective delivery framework has the lowest mean of 1.78 and therefore the greatest obstacle in efficient intervention delivery. Other factors in their descending order of gravity include: funding problem, corruption, human capacity deficiency, policy problem and environmental problem. It is pertinent to note that a tested and accepted intervention delivery framework will reduce the significance of the other five inhibiting factors.

Hypotheses Testing:

The hypothesis testing restates, validates and confirms dependability of investigative process. The statistical techniques employed are simple percentages, chi-square and mean distribution.

Hypothesis Test 1

H_0 : There is no correlation between accelerated rural development and effective international donor-aided interventions

H_1 : There is correlation between accelerated rural development and effective international donor-aided interventions.

Table 4: Contingency Table

| | O | E | $(O-E)^2$ | $(O-E)^2/E$ |
|-------|-----|-----|-----------|-------------|
| SA | 21 | 112 | 8281 | 73.94 |
| A | 437 | 112 | 105625 | 943.1 |
| U | 14 | 112 | 9604 | 85.75 |
| D | 54 | 112 | 3364 | 30.04 |
| SD | 34 | 112 | 6084 | 54.32 |
| Total | 560 | | | 1187.2 |

Whereas the Chi-square (X^2) test value at 5% significance level and 4 degrees of freedom is 9.49, the test statistic is 1187.2. Decision rule is to reject H_0 and accept H_1 since test statistic (1187.2) > critical value (9.49). Therefore, it can be concluded that there exists a relationship between rural development and effective international donor-aided interventions. That is, rural development is accelerated with increased international donor funding under efficient intervention delivery.

Hypothesis Test 2

H_0 : Beneficiary involvement as key player and effective donor-aided interventions are not related

H_1 : Beneficiary involvement as a key player and effective donor-aided interventions are related

The hypothesis tested is based on the response to the questionnaire statement; 'Recognition of the beneficiary as a key player in delivery process will improve the effectiveness of donor-aided interventions.'

Table 5: Contingency Table

| | O | E | $(O-E)^2$ | $(O-E)^2/E$ |
|-------|-----|-----|-----------|-------------|
| SA | 134 | 112 | 484 | 0.86 |
| A | 287 | 112 | 30625 | 273.43 |
| U | 42 | 112 | 4900 | 43.75 |
| D | 95 | 112 | 289 | 2.58 |
| SD | 2 | 112 | 12100 | 108.04 |
| Total | 560 | | | 428.66 |

Whereas the Chi-square (X^2) test value at 5% significance level and 4 degrees of freedom is 9.49, the test statistic is 428.66. Decision rule is to reject H_0 and accept H_1 since test statistic (428.66) > critical value (9.49). Therefore, it is convenient to conclude that recognition of critical role of beneficiary and effectiveness of intervention are related. That is, the assignment of critical roles to beneficiary in delivery process will improve effectiveness of international donor-aided interventions at rural level of the society.

Table 6 shows a summary of other survey responses as provided by the 560 respondents:

Table 6: a summary of other survey responses as provided by the 560 respondents

| Response Solicitations | Responses | | | Conclusions |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|---|
| | Yes | No | Not sure | |
| Aware of foreign aided project in your area? | 353(63%) | 198(35.4%) | 9(1.6%) | The majority of the rural dwellers are aware of aided projects in their area. |
| There was visible local government involvement in project implementation. | 125 (22.3%) | 412 (73.6%) | 23(4.1%) | Response shows an integration gap that should be closed for effectiveness of aid. |
| Project met the most pressing need of your area | 293(52.3%) | 232(41.4%) | 35(6.3%) | There is marginal developmental impact of most aided project in the region. |
| There was frequent town meeting before/during project implementation. | 179(32%) | 352(62.9%) | 29(5.1%) | Low frequency of town meeting suggests lack of effective feedback mechanism. |
| There was a supervisory team involving donors and community leadership on project supervision. | 231(41.3%) | 282(50.4%) | 47(8.3%) | This response confirms lack of proper integration of beneficiary. |
| Project site was unanimously and strategically located within reach of the majority. | 277(49.5%) | 215(38.4%) | 68(12.1%) | During site visits, it was observed that some projects were sited based on other reasons than collective advantage. |
| Project funds were released on time | 332(59.3%) | 205(36.6%) | 23(4.1%) | Majority agreed to timeliness in funds disbursement which is responsible for short delivery time of projects in most areas. |
| Community takes full ownership of the project after implementation. | 409(73%) | 136(24.3%) | 15(2.7%) | This is in accordance with observed trends in the research area. |
| There are community self-help efforts that need aid in your area. | 398(71.1%) | 131(23.4%) | 31(5.5%) | Most benefiting rural communities have self-help efforts for which aid is desirable. |

CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this research was to examine the key factors inhibiting effectiveness of International donor-aided interventions in Niger delta rural communities. This research empirically evaluated captured data from 70 rural-based and randomly selected projects in the Niger delta region. The research findings interestingly show that there are myriad factors that affect effectiveness of donor aided projects.

First, defective delivery framework was discovered as the greatest obstacle to effectiveness of the donor aided efforts. This finding confirms assertions in Mosley & Marion (2000) that inadequate integration of beneficiary in decision process, lack of alignment of procedures and practices, lack of requisite cooperation, poor design and monitoring of aided project are common causes of ineffective economic governance and under utilization of development assistance. Oladipo (2000) strengthens this finding by remarking that failures of rural developmental projects are associated by various studies to the exclusion of development partners and project beneficiaries in the assessment of such projects' performance. Second, funding problem is another factor that challenges effectiveness of aid. This is in agreement with Arndt (2000), which found that staff in donors' funds office may lack requisite knowledge in areas of foreign aid management, accounting, budgeting and expenditure protocols. The obvious outcomes of this knowledge gap are untimely fund allocation and rejection of future engagements. O'Connell & Soludo (2001) arguably confirms that accountability is a key component of effectiveness. Third, Corruption is considered a formidable obstacle to aid effectiveness as it sabotages developmental efforts and compromises resource optimisation. This is in accordance with Sanusi (2010) which remarks that Nigeria suffers so acutely from corruption that it is considered as a cultural value. Fourth, human capacity deficit ranks in gravity to corruption in affecting effectiveness of aid. This agrees with a recent research in Ofunya (2013) which indicates that managerial factors (skill, knowledge, leadership style, culture and technical capability deficits) negatively affect the effective use of aid. Fifth, policy framework deficit affects effective use of significantly. Policies generally drive visions and guide efforts towards desirable state of affairs. Regarding policies, Hyden (2005) remarks that political leaders, and by extension aid donors, reciprocate goodwill of their clients and supporters by allowing resources to flow in line of patronage than policy. This is in agreement with findings during observatory visits in which it became obvious that peaceful communities that play host to multinational firms attract more interventions than the hostile counterparts. Lastly, environmental factor poses a significance challenge to effectiveness of aid. The disruptive activities of restive youth, insecurity of lives and properties, anti-developmental dispositions of some government agencies, multiple levies and clearance create unnecessary and distracting bottlenecks in aid implementation.

The findings also enumerated possible approaches that could be used to improve the effectiveness of donor aided interventions in Niger delta as follows: beneficiary-based implementation framework, bridging of knowledge and skill gap, appropriate partnership among other. The findings can help all stakeholders of rural development understand factors that affect efficiency of donor-aided intervention from an experiential perspective. It is expected that this contribution to knowledge can be leveraged on for the accelerated development of Niger delta region.

This study was constrained by time, high logistic costs arising from observatory visits to rural communities, inherent prejudices and indispositions on part of the locals and the expansive research environment. The researcher considers outcome as reasonable for generalizations having analyzed retrieved data from 560 respondents (80% of total administered questionnaires).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings in this study is enough justification to contend that donor aided interventions in Niger delta region have effectiveness challenges that must be dealt with if developmental aspirations of the rural people are to be met. It is pertinent to observe that aid effectiveness issues vary across cultural, experiential, technological, socio-political, as well as geographical lines and need multi-faceted approaches. The following are recommendation in dealing with foregoing issues:

- i. Beneficiary should be encouraged to have a strong sense of intervention ownership through active involvement in delivery processes such as project conception, implementation, monitoring and cooperation
- ii. Design of the implementation frameworks should recognize local content, need and initiatives and should be beneficiary-based in approach. Transparency and equal opportunity in choice of interventions meets the needs of the people in the different rural communities.
- iii. Donors should seek avenues of channelling aid through Niger delta development funds to which funding applications are made for community-based self-help efforts.

- iv. Sustainability of aided projects should be guaranteed via intervention-friendly policies of the government at all levels such subsidizing costs of spare parts and technological requirements training to enable locals use project outcome effectively.
- v. Local NGOs should be supported but under a framework that regulates and ensures visibility of their activities to reduce cases of resource diversions and accountability deficit
- vi. Partnerships and cooperation among stakeholders of rural development must be encouraged as a means of optimizing resources, shared risks and ensuring sustainability.
- vii. Capacity development should be considered as prime and requisite governance reforms must be in place for effectiveness of aid. Government should support independent, rural-level institutions to harness initiatives for concrete developmental outcomes
- viii. Rural development stakeholders should research and fully articulate inherent challenges in the region to ensure that long –term treatment of the regional conflicts.
- ix. Donors should strengthen recipients' development and operational frameworks instead of subverting or replacing such frameworks. This implies that effectiveness of aid is predicated upon peculiarities of receiver's than donor's environment.
- x. Donors and partner countries should respect Parish declaration on effectiveness of aid. This declaration mandates establishment of developmental frameworks by stakeholders that will ensure efficient delivery of intervention outcomes and accountability
- xi. Implementation of ICT policy for ease in activity reporting, proper documentations for all projects in region to reduce costly experience of duplication of efforts
- xii. Government should stop paying lip-service to fight against corruption and corrupt practices. Tough legal policies and sanctions should be put in place as deterrents against any erring stakeholder.
- xiii. Government should establish by act of parliament aid management offices (AMOs) at all levels of government to deal with aid proposals, fund management and monitoring issues.
- xiv. Stakeholders of sustainable rural development should embrace maintenance culture; as effectiveness of interventions goes beyond project delivery to sustainability of such efforts.
- xv. Policy makers in government should produce a well articulated national development plan for proper alignment of all international donor-aided interventions.
- xvi. The present democratic governance should be sustained and the vision20:20 goals for rural development must be implemented if Nigeria is to become a dominant economy.

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