

Assessing the Role of Local Government Administration in Community Development in Nigeria: A Study of Akinyele Local Government of Oyo State (2014-2024)

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Abstract

This study assesses the role of local government administration in promoting community development in Nigeria, with a focus on Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. Local governments, as the third tier of government, are strategically positioned to drive grassroots development through policies and programs tailored to meet the needs of their communities. However, the effectiveness of these efforts has often been questioned due to issues such as poor governance, lack of transparency, and limited citizen participation. The study is guided by two key objectives: first, to examine the effectiveness of local government policies and programs in promoting community development in Akinyele; and second, to assess the level of community participation and engagement in these initiatives. Using a descriptive method involving surveys, interviews, and document analysis, the study found that while Akinyele Local Government has introduced several development programs in areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure, the impact of these initiatives has been undermined by inadequate funding, poor policy implementation, and limited citizen engagement. Community participation was found to be low, with many residents unaware of ongoing projects or lacking opportunities to contribute to decision-making processes. The study concludes that for local governments like Akinyele to fulfill their developmental mandate, there is a critical need to strengthen administrative capacity, improve transparency, and institutionalize mechanisms for inclusive participation. These steps will not only enhance the effectiveness of local governance but also ensure that development efforts reflect the genuine needs and aspirations of the community.

Key Words: Local Government, Administration, Community Development, Nigeria, Akinyele Local Government, Oyo State

Introduction

Local government has been and will remain a fundamental driver of growth in various regions

globally, and its significance and influence on the daily lives of inhabitants cannot be overstated. Local government is a political body established by a nation as a subordinate entity to distribute or decentralise political power; in the English context, it signifies local self-governance (Akuche & Akindoyin, 2025). Local government is a political subdivision of a national government or, in a federal system, a subdivision of regional government. Local government administration is intrinsically linked to community development, such that any discussion on one inherently involves the other, as it was fundamentally established to foster development at the grassroots level (Akuche & Akindoyin, 2024). Community development embodies a novel ideology. It is defined as a process wherein the efforts of the populace are aligned with those of governmental authorities to enhance the economic, social, and cultural conditions of communities, facilitating their active integration and enabling full contribution to national success.

Local government is integral to community development. It functions as the principal governmental entity at the local level, tasked with meeting the needs and ambitions of its constituents. The functions of local government in community development can be classified into four primary domains: planning and infrastructure development, service provision, community participation, and economic advancement (Akindoyin & Badru, 2024). Local government is primarily tasked with urban and regional planning, which entails formulating a vision for the community's future. They design extensive plans that direct land utilisation, zoning statutes, and infrastructural advancement. In doing so, they guarantee that communities are cultivated sustainably and systematically, enhancing land utilisation and conserving natural resources.

Local government play a crucial role in infrastructure development. They supervise the development and upkeep of vital public infrastructure and services, including roads, bridges, parks, libraries, schools, and healthcare facilities. Through infrastructure investment, local government improves quality of life and supplies essential facilities to the community. Furthermore, local government is accountable for the provision of services. They deliver vital services to the community, encompassing water supply, trash management, public transportation, public safety, and emergency services. Through the effective provision of these services, local government enhances the overall welfare and security of the community (Akindoyin & Badru, 2024). Moreover, local government is crucial in fostering community engagement. They serve as a conduit between the populace and the decision-making process. The local government conducts public hearings, town hall meetings, and community forums to solicit feedback and input from locals. This allows them to make informed decisions that align with the community's needs and objectives. By including citizens in decision-making processes, local government promotes openness, accountability, and participatory democracy. Ultimately, local government plays a crucial role in economic development. They establish an atmosphere favourable to business expansion by providing incentives, fostering entrepreneurship, attracting investments, and supporting local industries.

They cooperate with diverse stakeholders, including chambers of commerce, educational institutions, and non-profit organisations, to foster economic growth and employment creation. By cultivating a robust economy, local government improves the quality of life and possibilities accessible to its inhabitants. In Nigeria, the function of local government at the grassroots level is distinctly acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of the 1976 local government reform, which underscores that a primary objective of local government is to mobilise human and material resources by engaging the public in the advancement of local governance. Consequently, numerous communities have established schools, constructed roads and bridges, and implemented higher education scholarship programs for their children. Contemporary community development is rooted on and has evolved from historical experiences (Adeyemi & Omolaja, 2025). The novelty lies in the increasing recognition of community development concepts, which are not new; rather, it is the emphasis on them that renders the situation almost revolutionary. The principle of community development relies on the belief in individuals' capacity to learn, enabling them to achieve enhanced living standards and foster improved communities incrementally. Consequently, rural development has consistently been a priority within the programs of a particular administration. The Oyo State government, in formulating

its rural development blueprint, primarily seeks to educate and engage grassroots populations, actively involving them in effective community development. It advocates for an integrated and multidimensional approach to community development. This study therefore intend to assess the role of local government administration in community development in Nigeria while emphasising on the Akinyele local government area of oyo with a time frame of 2014 to 2024.

Statement of the Problem

The local government administration, being the nearest level of government to the populace, is crucial in promoting and enabling community development activities. The efficacy of local government administration in Nigeria in executing this responsibility has been a matter of concern and discussion. Nigerian local governments face constrained financial resources, hindering their potential to effectively execute community development initiatives and programs. This financial limitation frequently leads to inadequate infrastructure development, subpar service delivery, and restricted support for grassroots efforts focused on community development. Likewise, instances of corruption, incompetence, and inadequate leadership within local government administrations have obstructed the efficient and transparent allocation of resources for community development. The deficiency of effective governance at the local level has resulted in a scenario where the needs and ambitions of community members are frequently neglected or insufficiently handled. Consequently, all previously cited indicators imply ongoing obstacles to community development in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the research is to analyse the critical role of local Government administration in community development in Nigeria with a focus on Akinyele local government of Oyo State. However, the specific objectives of the study are to;

1. Examine the effectiveness of local government policies and programs in promoting community development in Akinyele Local Government.
2. Assess the level of community participation and engagement in local government development initiatives in Akinyele Local Government.

Research Questions

1. How effective are the policies and programs implemented by the Akinyele Local Government in fostering community development?
2. What is the extent of community involvement in the planning and execution of development projects initiated by the Akinyele Local Government?

Literature Review

The Concept of Community Development

In examining the concept of community development, it is necessary to provide a concise definition of "community," which, as defined by Buddle, refers to any notion of the local. Development is a process focused on human capital within a certain area throughout time, aimed at managing and facilitating change while minimising or eliminating unnecessary alterations (Akindoyin & Akuche, 2023). Community Development is a process designed to enhance the welfare of individuals within a defined geographic region by enabling them to engage in collective action and implement beneficial changes in their community. It encompasses various actions and techniques aimed at improving the social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions of a community (Akindoyin & Akuche, 2023). The essence of community development is in the cultivation of social capital, encompassing the networks, relationships, and trust among community members. Community development initiatives aim to enhance cooperation, solidarity, and mutual assistance among inhabitants by cultivating social capital. This can result in heightened civic involvement, improved communication, and a more robust sense of communal identity.

Community development entails recognising and addressing the needs and priorities of the community using a participatory methodology. This entails including community members in decision-making processes, planning, and the execution of projects that impact them. Involving citizens in determining their future enhances the sustainability and efficacy of community development projects. Moreover, community development prioritises the enhancement of local ability and resilience. These include offering opportunities for skill enhancement, training, education, and leadership development within the community. Investing in human capital enables communities to achieve greater self-sufficiency and enhances their capacity to address issues and seize opportunities (Odesanmi, 2024). A crucial element of community development is fostering social inclusion and equity. This entails guaranteeing that all community members have access to resources, services, and opportunities irrespective of their background or circumstances. By diminishing obstacles to participation and tackling disparities, community development can foster a more equitable and unified society. Consequently, community development represents a comprehensive strategy aimed at empowering individuals and groups to collaboratively pursue shared objectives. Through the promotion of collaboration, involvement, and inclusivity, community development may generate vibrant, resilient, and sustainable communities in which all members can thrive. Following the above explanation, it is safe to say that there is no definitive and universally recognised definition of community development. However, community development is made in order to facilitate significant increasing employment opportunities in rural community to project but also including;

- i. finding effective ways of stimulating helping and reaching people to adopt new method and to learn skills.
- ii. ensuring the preservative of the community (Akindoyin & Akuche, 2023).

Background to Community Development in Nigeria

The background to community development in Nigeria is ancient; however, prior to World War II, the focus was predominantly on communication, with limited attention given to small-scale development addressing the needs and welfare of local communities. Recently, numerous African governments have prioritised development at both the local and national levels (Atisa, 2021). The government currently implements specialised programs to encourage and assist individuals in enhancing their local living conditions. Nigeria's history dates back to 1900 when Frederick Lugard was appointed as the High Commissioner for the Northern Protectorate of Nigeria. He confronted the challenge of governing the populace in this expansive region without sufficient personnel and little financial resources.

From 1900 to 1906, Lugard successfully transformed the region and instituted a system of direct governance. The implementation of direct rule produced significant benefits. The government resolved to amalgamate the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, only to subsequently discover that the Southern political administration was less developed than that of the North, so undermining the feasibility of indirect rule (Inagbor, 2023). Lugard aimed to enhance the economic status of individuals in Nigeria, particularly with the establishment of the rail system, which would promote improved material and social living conditions within the community. The United Nations defines it as the process wherein the endeavours of the populace are amalgamated with those of governmental authorities to enhance the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the community, facilitating their integration into national life and enabling their full contribution to national projects. It also signifies any approach by which individuals identify their requirements and strategise for the attainment of their established objectives, utilising either their own resources or external assistance where feasible (Inagbor, 2023).

Community development is significantly motivated by the aspiration for change via voluntary approaches and the engagement of individuals and groups in the development process to attain certain objectives (Inagbor, 2023). The International Cooperation Administration defines community development as "a process wherein a community organises its services for planning, when necessary, utilising resources and materials from governmental agencies external to the community" in Northern and Southern Nigeria. Prior to 1914, when Lugard assumed the role

of Governor-General of Nigeria, the British administration in the south had instituted native courts, presided over by district commissioners, with warrant chiefs, who were indigenous, serving as influential members of the court.

The warrant chiefs served as government representatives, dismantling traditional communal living. Church authorities successfully encouraged the populace to engage in collective labour to construct institutions such as churches and schools. The name “community development” encapsulates their efforts. The establishment of native administration in the early 1930s altered the warrant chief system, wherein warrant chiefs served as government representatives at the village level.

The native authority councillors were selected from the village head and they upheld their roles in accordance with the customs of the community. Prior to the native authority councils demonstrating their efficacy, the Second World War commenced, concluding in 1945. Concurrently, the existing educational framework in the eastern states prompted proposals for the establishment of local government councils, culminating in the formation of the inaugural country council (Aloko, 2023).

In Eastern Nigeria, specifically in Ekpene, located in present-day Akwa Ibom State, the Ekpene experience of 1951 prompted the government to form other country councils. By 1955, local government legislation was enacted, assigning these councils responsibilities for community development. Currently, aside from truck routes, the electrification of express highways and several other complex projects concentrated in urban regions, every new initiative in rural areas is mostly constructed via the collective efforts of the local populace.

The Concept of Local Government

Local Government is a state entity established to facilitate development initiatives within a specific area or district, aiming to ensure that the government’s influence is experienced at the grassroots level (Akuche & Akindoyin, 2024). Local government is the smallest governmental entity established to address all local interests necessitating governmental oversight. Local Government constitutes the third tier of governance, positioning it in close proximity to the populace at the grassroots or community level. Its proximity to the local populace allows it to execute specialised activities and services that pertain to the interests and ambitions of the communities (Akuche & Akindoyin, 2024). Local government denotes an administrative entity functioning at the local level, usually within a defined geographical region such as a municipality or county. It wields authority and delivers vital public services, including public safety, infrastructure development, and social welfare programs, to the local community. Local government is defined as the governance system enabling citizens to engage in decision-making processes and directly influence local policies and regulations. It is tasked with the implementation and enforcement of laws and regulations within a designated jurisdiction, safeguarding the welfare and advancement of the local community.

Akinyele Local Government

The administrative territory known as Akinyele Local Government Area represents one of the divisions in Oyo State located within Nigeria. The local government established in 1976 emerged as part of the widespread local government reforms instituted by the military rule at that time to distribute governance while enhancing community-level development (Zakaree, 2022). The Akinyele family gave their name to the local government which holds historical significance for its role in leading Ibadan town.

The northern region of the Ibadan metropolis forms the advantageous geographical position for Akinyele LGA within Oyo State. The northern border of Akinyele Local Government Area extends to Afijio Local Government Area while Lagelu Local Government Area occupies its eastern portion and Ido Local Government Area sits in the western sector and Ibadan North Local Government Area forms the southern territorial mark (Zakaree, 2022). The central administrative location for Akinyele LGA exists in Moniya where travelers find convenient transportation links between Ibadan and Oyo and other districts of northern Nigeria.

Through history the territory that became Akinyele LGA maintained its essential connection to the Ibadan-based Yoruba political order. Most of the residents as Yoruba people who maintain rich cultural traditions through their traditional institutions. Before establishing the local government the region consisted mainly of rural spaces encompassing several farming communities and towns. The rich farmland drives the economic base through agriculture where locals maintain farms for crops such as yam, cassava, maize and vegetables together with animal breeding activities.

When the local government established its branches it triggered remarkable changes throughout the territory. The new local government system allowed authorities to build necessary facilities such as education institutions, pathways along with medical centers and trading places. The extensive growth of Ibadan city has transformed Akinyele into a modern area that modernized from an agricultural town to an urbanized area. The growing urbanisation has produced higher commercial operations together with real estate advancements while drawing population shifts from multiple regions of the nation. Akinyele LGA excels as the home of important institutions that include both the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and the Oyo State Orientation Camp of the National Youth Service Corps (Adeleke & Bukola, 2024). The institutions based there both support the local economic growth and increase the area's recognition at both local and international levels.

The historical heritage and cultural traditions of Akinyele Local Government Area derive from its place within the broad Ibadan traditional structure. The growth of Akinyele from its rural origins into an urban center continues to contribute significantly to Oyo State development.

Methodology

The study employs the descriptive research approach. It explore the function of local government administration in community development in Akinyele Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State. The descriptive design provides an extensive study of community development initiatives with local government administrative roles and their secondary dimensions. The research used both primary and secondary data collections methods. In-depth interviewing served as the data collection method for primary information. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with six important informants who were local government employees alongside traditional figures and Community Development Association (CDA) executives. The interviews delivered detailed information about the way policies function and the problems faced by local governance units and how different community stakeholders participate in project work. The researcher gathered secondary information from official documents and reports which were published by Akinyele Local Government Secretariat and Oyo State Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Matters and scholarly articles and policy documents. The interview-based qualitative data underwent transcription before researchers analysed it through thematic methods to discover regular patterns and themes. The chosen methodological approach delivers comprehensive knowledge about local government community development activities by capturing first-hand experiences in Akinyele LGA. The research method provides stronger validity and reliability to the obtained data results.

Results

Sequel to the research questions of this research paper, the following questions were asked during the interview section with stakeholders as emphasised in the methodology.

1. *Can you describe some of the key development programs implemented by the Akinyele Local Government in recent years?*

Respondent: Some of the transformation programs initiated by Akinyele Local Government can be traced to the recent past. Notably, the Akinyele Farmers' Market construction and the Sasa Market have promoted local business promoting modern facilities for traders as well as boosting economic activities. In education, an additional block of classroom was commissioned at Sagbe Community Primary School, indicating a desire to enhance learning environments. Infrastructure has been given attention through the many road rehabilitation and drainage works that have enabled easier

movement of people and reduction of flooding . Also the installation of motorized boreholes in under-served areas has also increased access to clean water thus, improving public health.

2. *In your opinion, how successful have these programs been in addressing the needs of the community?*

Respondent: According to my view; the programs have been moderately successful in meeting the needs of the community. For example, the youth empowerment initiative gave vocational training which exposed many youth to employment thus reducing crime level. In the same vein, the health outreach program enhanced availability of primary health care especially in rural areas. Nevertheless, such problems as lack of funding and lack of consistent follow up have hampered long term impact. Feedback from the community shows endorsement of the efforts but need of more sustainable interventions. Overall though the programs have begun in a positive way enhanced effectiveness and reach could be attained with more community involvement and better monitoring.

3. *What challenges do you think the local government faces in implementing its development policies?*

Respondent: Various challenges are encountered by local governments when implementing development policies. The biggest problem is lack of funds; this leaves them insufficient to provide some of the key services such as construction of roads or waste management. For instance, most rural councils have an uphill task of maintaining infrastructure because of limited resources. Another is poor coordination with high levels of government thus, causing delays in approvals of projects. Besides, corruption and lack of transparency can obstruct progress. In certain areas, staff is limited technically such that, they are unable to plan or monitor the development projects with ease, and thereby enacting poorly executed policies with no prior concern to community needs.

4. *How are community members involved in identifying the needs and priorities for development projects?*

Respondent: Community members participate through town hall meetings, focus group discussions and community mapping. For instance, the lack of clean water informed the construction of boreholes in laundry projects in rural areas of Akinyele local government during a needs assessment meeting. Also, in the local government, youth and women's groups influenced sets priorities for an agricultural scheme through stakeholder forums. Such inclusive platforms ensure that local realities are reflected in the development initiatives, hence ownership, and ensuring sustainability. Through active participation in decision making, community members also shape the interventions that would best serve their immediate needs as well long term development goals.

5. *Can you explain the process through which the community participates in the planning and execution of local government initiatives?*

Respondent: Certainly. Community involvement in the local government programs is usually initiated by town hall meeting where people express their needs and priorities. For instance, it may be during a road construction project that the community members will indicate routes to be followed or concentrated areas of high traffic.. Stakeholder forums and participatory budgeting meetings also make it possible for residents to provide ideas and shape expenditure decision. In implementation, people within the locality could form monitoring committees to watch progress and implement transparency. In a single example, a community in Akinyele contributed to designing and supervising a water project that satisfied local requirements. This inclusive process raises ownership and accountability and ensures better alignment of governments services to the needs of the community.

6. *Do you feel that the level of community involvement has had a positive impact on the success of these projects? Why or why not?*

Respondent: Yes, impact of community involvement on these projects' success has been quite huge. Involved communities take ownership hence making it sustainable. In a rural water project that I supported, community members established committees for the maintenance of facility, making sure that the facility would be running long after implementation. It also helped in tailoring solutions to local need thus making use more and acceptance higher. On the other hand, a sanitation initiative with an insufficient community participation elicited a reaction, leading to failure. These experiences demonstrate that if people feel heard and responsible, they are more committed, which leads to better outcomes, and long-term success. Community involvement is truly essential.

Discussion of Findings

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Policies and Programs Implemented by the Akinyele Local Government in Fostering Community Development

Drawing from the findings from the respondents, Akinyele Local Government, of Oyo State, Nigeria and has put in place diverse policies, programs to ensure development of the community especially in areas such as education, health, infrastructure and youth empowerment. Nonetheless, while some of the initiatives have had moderate success, the overall efficacy is still mixed, as these challenges persist with regards to governance, funding and implementation.

One of the remarkable policies has been the rehabilitation of primary health centres in villages such as Ojoo, Moniya and Olorisa-Oko. These facilities have contributed positively in increasing access to basic healthcare, maternal and child health services. For example, the Moniya Primary Health Centre is now able to run with more staff and medical items and by so doing, relieving the pressure on tertiary institutions in Ibadan. This initiative has had positive outcomes on: health outcomes and general well-being of the community.

The local government has undertaken reconstruction of dilapidated public schools and issued instructional materials for the education sector. The renovation of Akinyele community public primary school, for instance gave students a safe learning environment. Although these initiatives have been confined to a select number of schools, with several others without even basic amenities, there appears to be a necessity for a more balanced execution of policy.

Infrastructure wise, the Akinyele Local Government has started road grading in the rural areas to enhance proper connectivity. Roads in such places as Ijaiye e.g Iroko have been graded to make the movement of farm produce easier to the markets. Despite the increasing economic activity in the rural community, the inability to create lasting buildings and maintain them regularly ultimately diminishes the long-term impact of these efforts.

Also introduced are youth empowerment projects such as vocational training in tailoring, hairdressing and carpentry. Beneficiaries from Olorunda and Ajibade have certified to have initiated small businesses after training and such had enhanced their lives. However, lack of monitoring and lack of start-up capital prevent these programs from being scaled up.

Finally, the Akinyele Local Government has exerted commendable efforts in promoting community development in health, education, and infrastructure among other empowerment programs. However, such interventions are constrained with inconsistent funding, weak monitoring mechanisms and lack of community involvement. For more sustainable outcomes of development, the local government needs to embrace inclusive planning, clear allocation of resources and build partnerships with Community Based Organizations.

Community Involvement in Development Projects

Findings from the respondents of this research study emphasised that community participation in planning and actual implementation of development activities of development activities of the Akinyele Local Government (LG) has been minimal with implications of poor consultation and involvement. There are constitutional provisions in Nigeria for grassroots engagement in governance, but these are particularly weak on the street-level. In Akinyele LG development programs such as rehabilitation of road, construction of market structures and borehole drilling

have been implemented. It however often happens that these projects are undertaken without proper community engagement.

For instance, the construction of a motor park in Moniya, the LG headquarters according to this study, went through with minimal consultation on the matter. Traders and transport workers also manifested resistance to the project; due to lack of space and input, they resisted. Similarly, borehole projects in the rural areas such as Alabata and Ojoo also suffered from poor siting and congestion, largely because they lacked satisfactory needs analysis and consultation with locals. Although there are difficulties, there are incidences of community participation. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and local youth groups working together with LG officials facilitated the identification of priorities and monitoring of contractors in renewables of primary schools in Ajibade and Elekuru; resulting in more desirable outcomes and local ownership. Such cases prove that where inclusive planning exists, project success gets better.

In general, levels of community participation in Akinyele LG are mixed and frequently symbolic. While there are frameworks such as ward development committees in place that are supposed to bridge this gap, they're not popular due to political interference, and the available funding is insufficient. If development efforts are to be sustainable the local government must institutionalize participatory planning, regularly consult community stakeholders and develop capacity at the grassroots level. Then development can truly capture the needs and aspirations of the people.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine the role of local government administration in community development in Nigeria, using Akinyele Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo state, as a case study. Based on the research questions, the findings give an informed picture of the effectiveness of local government endeavor and level of community involvement in development project within LGA.

Initially, the research showed that despite the fact that the Akinyele Local Government has adopted several policies and programs with a view to advancing the development of the community, its overall impacts have been mixed. Some development has been achieved in the areas of primary health care delivery, basic education, rural electrification and road construction. Yet, the combined outcomes of these interventions are often constrained by challenges such as insufficient financial allocation, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and sparse technical capacity. As such, while such policies are on paper, their implementation always fails to meet expectations, therefore failing to add any value towards sustainable community development.

Secondly, the research revealed that community participation in development project planning and implementation is still low. Major initiatives are, however, often conceptualized and executed by the local government with little participation from community members. This top-down approach dilutes the community ownership of projects, diminishes the relevancy of interventions to local needs, and diminishes long term sustainability. Where community engagement was reported, it seemed largely tokenistic and there was little procedural way to sustain participation or feedback.

Over all the study concludes that while the Akinyele Local Government is playing a critical role in the developmental process huge hurdles still remain in the execution of policies and in citizen participation. Improvements of the administrative capacity of the local government, transparency and accountability and institutionalization of participatory mechanisms are important for increasing the effectiveness of the community development outcomes. There is, in addition, an urgent demand for the state and federal governments to empower local governments more effectively by supporting them not only with finances but also by strengthening capacity and also with policy oversight.

Concisely, for such local governments like the Akinyele to successfully lead the process of driving community development, there is a need for move towards inclusive, well resourced, and transparent governance. It can only be through such that the potential of local government administration in catalysing grassroots development in Nigeria is maximised.

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