



EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATIONS (CDAs) IN IMPLEMENTING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN SURULERE, LAGOS STATE

Busari-Akinbode Sofiat Abimbola* and Temilola Olusegun Moses

Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos

*Email: sofiatbusariakinbode@gmail.com, sbusari-akinbode@unilag.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: *Community development, a generic method of social work has been in practice in Africa, specifically Nigeria for donkey years, though often practiced informally through self-help efforts. Community Development Associations (CDAs) are expected to be at the front burner of implementing these self-help projects. This study therefore sought to examine the effectiveness and challenges of CDAs in implementing development projects in Surulere Local Government Area, Lagos State. A comparative study was conducted using two purposively selected CDAs within close proximity; 12 In-depth Interviews were conducted with both the executive and non-executive members of the CDAs and 2 key informant interviews were conducted with the community development officers in each L.C.D.A. The study found that, factors such as poor funding and community participation; as well as variation in the mode of operation of the two associations were found to be impeding/enhancing the effectiveness of CDAs in implementing development projects. This study recommends that, executives of CDAs should engage in continuous sensitization of residents on the importance of community participation and that, government should consider increasing its financial support to CDAs.*

KEYWORDS: Community Development Associations (CDAs), Self-Help Projects, Development Projects, Community Participation, Community Development.

INTRODUCTION

Community participation, collective action and community involvement are old practices in social work, whose roots are traceable to the activities of settlement movements in the works of one of the Social Work pioneers- Jane Addams (Berstein and Grey, 1996)- whereby individuals in disadvantaged communities were strongly encouraged to participate actively in proffering solutions to their communal needs. These same practices are been adopted by Community Development Associations to better their lot in the society, either as a result of the state's failure to fulfil its part of the social contract to its citizenry, or to help augment governments' efforts in providing basic amenities. This study sought to investigate the effectiveness of CDAs in meeting their own felt needs as well as the challenges that confront them.

Community Development Associations (CDAs) are groups formed by voluntary members of a given geographical territory, with the common interest of improving the living conditions in their society. Okwakpam (2010) defined it "as the coming together of people living within a given locality or community with the sole aim of identifying their felt needs and agreeing on the ways, means and moves towards the realization of such identified needs" (p. 2). These groups have been termed in various ways, and are often interchangeably used as common



interest groups, self-help groups, community development unions and development associations (Omoje, 2014; Shaibu, 2014; Skiba, 2011; Okwakpam, 2010; Akpomovie, 2010; Wayne and Jo Anne, 1993).

While it is true that CDAs have been in existence in Nigeria for ages, (Sulaimon and Sagie, 2015) they did not achieve legal status until the year 2008 through the Community Development Associations Law of Lagos State; which arguably, strengthens their ability to deliver their mandates. Through this law, CDAs hold regular meetings with the local and state government authorities, however, this is preceded by a myriad of activities which include holding regular meetings with members to discuss their programmes and projects, identification of felt needs and participation in community development projects- through supply of labour, the contribution of money and materials.

These activities have in some cases yielded positive results, as Akinsorotan and Olujide (2007) documented some of the self-help projects of CDAs to include the provision of health facilities, market stalls, roads, schools, post offices, wells, boreholes, pipe-borne water and electricity. Apparently, self-help projects are not restricted to CDAs alone, as other social groups such as – Community Based Organizations (C.B.O's), youth associations, age grade groups, women associations and professional associations also engage in self-help projects (Okosun, 2017; Omoje, 2014; Shaibu, 2014; Thomas, 2011). This similarity of purpose could make it difficult to differentiate between CDAs and other common interest groups. However, CDAs differ from the latter because of its legal standing. In fact, it is informally regarded as the fourth tier of the government in the country. Their legal recognition confers on them certain rights and privileges, in as much as they act in accordance with the tenets of this law.

Also, the law provides CDAs with an inclusive structure. In that, they are well represented both at the local and state government levels. The executives of each CDA forms the Community Development Committee (C.D.C) whose function it is, to update the L.G.A on the operations of the CDAs. This is also reiterated at the state level where certain executives of the C.D.C represent the associations at the state level, forming the Community Development Advisory Council (C.D.A.C), who advise the state government on matters relating to community development (Community Development Associations Law, 2008). This way the government is able to operate a bottom-up approach to community development, becomes abreast of the activities and performance of every CDA in the state and is able to keep record, appraise and motivate deserving associations- usually shown in the Lagos State Annual Community Development Day.

Though a very few empirical papers have documented certain success stories of CDAs (Okwakpam, 2010); these achievements do not seem to measure up to expectation, given the deeply rooted link CDAs now have with the government. Despite the presence of CDAs in all the twenty Local Government Areas in Lagos State, development problems ranging from health, security, environmental, to infrastructural challenges persist across various communities in the state. The inability of CDAs to surmount their communal problems remains a question of relevance to national development. Are CDAs effective at all? What are the social factors affecting the performance of CDAs? Are there political factors inhibiting the performance of CDAs? These are crucial questions that this study attempts to address.



Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey method. Two closely situated CDAs namely Erekesu and Eguru Aguda CDAs were purposively selected in Itire/Ikate and Coker-Aguda Local Council Development Areas (L.C.D.As) respectively both in Surulere Local Government Area, Lagos State. This selection was based on their performance index as obtained from the community development officers in the selected L.C.D.As. The former (Erekusu CDA) was rated a 'low performing' CDA because of its inability to implement development projects for decades and the latter (Eguru Aguda CDA) was regarded a 'high performing' CDA due to its implementation of development projects in the last three years. The purpose of selecting two CDAs with contrasting levels of performance is to ensure a good basis for comparison. This study is qualitative in nature, and as such, the primary methods of data collection were in-depth and key informant interviews.

A total of 14 interviews were conducted for the purpose of this study, 12 of which were in-depth interviews and the remaining 2 were key informant interviews (conducted with 1 community development officer in each L.C.D.A). 3 executive members from each of the two CDAs were interviewed as well as 3 non-executive members of each CDA. The rationale for selecting both the executive and non-executive members of the CDAs is to ensure validity by corroborating the responses given by both parties. The purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used in selecting the executive members of the CDAs, that is, the inclusive criteria is for the respondent to be a member, and an executive of the selected CDA; while the purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used in selecting the non-executive members of the CDAs based on their availability and interest as at the time of the study.

The study was granted ethical approval by the Lagos State Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs (through a letter of introduction written to the selected L.C.D.As). Also, consent of participants was sought verbally before the commencement of the study and through a brief consent note written on the first page of the research instrument which also informed the respondents about the general objective of the study.

Interviews were conducted majorly in English Language; however, few respondents were more comfortable with their native language (Yoruba) which was later translated to English language. Responses from the interviews were recorded on a digital recording device and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were subjected to rigorous content analysis, in which major themes and sub-themes were identified.

RESULTS

This section presents data from the interviews conducted with the executive and non-executive members of the selected CDAs and the community development officers of the L.C.D.As of these associations. The respondents were ten males and four females. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, two major themes and several sub-themes were identified in line with the objective of the study, which include ;(1) 'successful development projects of CDAs; (b) 'governments' support to CDAs; (c) 'the bottom-up approach to community development in Lagos State through CDAs; (2) 'challenges faced by CDAs in implementing development projects'

**Theme 1: Successful development projects of the CDA in the past three years**

Implementation of development projects successfully, is a major way of assessing the performance of CDAs, and this can be hindered by so many factors such as the mode of operation adopted by CDAs. CDAs operate in different ways, the low performing CDA reported that it functions as a central body to several 'street resident associations' who are to operate individually on the development of their streets and give feedback to the CDA. This was recounted by an executive member of the CDA as follows;

Our CDA is made up of Street Resident Associations. Almost all streets (resident associations) hold meetings almost once a month to gather fund and recruit security men, embark on electrification activities and so on, all these are communicated to us at the CDA (IDI Male, 74 years)

However, there appear to be a lack of synergy between this (low performing) CDA and its resident associations, which impacts negatively on its performance. The resident associations feel somewhat detached from the CDA and fail to attribute their achievements to the CDA. One of the executives of a resident association in the low performing CDA recounted;

I cannot point to any project done by the CDA, apart from their involvement when we had issues with NEPA (National Electric Power Authority), I have never seen the work of the CDA (IDI Male, 51 years)

Also, when asked if he attends the meetings of the CDA, he said;

No, it is because of the setup of the CDA that I see, I cannot run into them. It is those baba, baba them (the elderly). If I do, my idea will be different from their own and I don't want any baba to say I am doing too much or I am proving to know too much. I just leave them with their own. Although they have been calling me to come but my idea will not work with them. That is how I see it, but on this street no person participates apart from baba xyz who is an executive of the CDA (IDI Male, 51 years)

Evidently, the low performing CDA did not execute any development project in the last three years. However, they have recorded some development projects many years back. An executive member of the CDA narrates;

We built the drainage in the 1970's and we also graded the roads. We have a police post project which we started in 1994 but till date we are yet to complete it and it's paining me seriously. The project was embarked on because of high rate of robbery at that time, cost of completion is very high, the police is not making it easy, they are giving us demands that are difficult to meet. We are looking at changing the use of the building to a vocational center for the benefit of the community. We do not have any other project because we were strongly advised not to commence another project if a pending project is on ground (IDI Male, 74 years)

This implies that the CDA has not implemented any development project for over two decades, but the same is not the case with its resident associations as they have recorded a number of successes in the last three years. An executive member of one of the resident associations in the low performing CDA reported;



...part of it is that we ensure that we get a brand new transformer, for example, to install the transformer we are to make a construction for the transformer to serve as a platform, so water won't enter our new transformer. Like three years back we were on the Cele transmission supply as our source of electricity supply where we hardly had power. We came together with other residents associations and approached NEPA. We liaised with NEPA to switch us to the source coming from Festac, we had to raise about one million, seven hundred thousand naira (N1,700,000) to get this done with other resident associations to execute it. That is the reason we have constant power supply now. We levy ourselves to raise this money but some people still owe. The level of compliance is still low. We also ensure security is on point and breakage into houses has stopped (IDI Male, 50 years)

On the other hand, the high performing CDA recorded some level of success on project execution in the last three years which include but not limited to; construction of security gate, purchase and installation of transformers, continuous provision of informal security apparatus and the purchase of land for building a community hall which would serve the needs of the community upon completion. The executive and non-executive members of the CDA recount;

We have been able to provide security for the community, before now we use to have cases of robbery because when they wanted to repair this road, they removed the gate; we have to do it by ourselves. We spent over seven hundred thousand naira in installing another gate which the community member raised the fund. We acquired a land, the person claiming the land with us passed away and the hoodlums wanted to sell the land. They have been bringing buyers to see the land but I used my influence to acquire the land for the community. We have started construction through the help of the residents (IDI Male, 63 years)

Another executive recounts;

Definitely we have achieved so much because....as regards electricity we work assiduously to obtain about four transformers, the recent one is the one mounted in Babatope Street (a member street), if not for the general power issue we should have light now. If we have a general course to achieve, we are always united, presently we are building a community hall out of the stipends we are contributing, we ought to have made a lot of progress on the hall but our gate was demolished while constructing Brown road which made us spend a lot of money installing another one (IDI Male, 68 years).

To validate the above responses, a non-executive member of the high performing CDA recounts;

Yes, the CDA was the one who helped us replace our street gate, because, when that brown road (link road) was constructed, the (entrance) gate was removed and as a result of that, we experienced robbery every single day. They (the robbers) don't say because they came yesterday they will not come today; they were not scared of being caught. Even our products and materials we keep here were not safe. So as a result of this, the CDA came up with the idea of fixing a new gate which everyone embraced. They billed us and we all contributed and that was how the gate was fixed. In fact, they



employed security guards for this community and they asked everyone to pay monthly (IDI Male, 42 years)

The high performing CDA did not only succeed in meeting the pressing infrastructural needs of its community but also succeeded in meeting their social needs by enforcing laws that protect their environment (such as anti-refuse burning), and promoting social order in their community- through cutting short the excesses of restaurants and motorcycle riders which would otherwise be leveraged on by armed robbers to invade communities.

Government's support to CDAs

The government supports the CDAs in executing their development projects, although the support is insufficient, and subject to proof of project commencement with challenges of completion. This gesture is an act of encouraging the activities of the CDAs. A key informant gives an account of such support;

The CDA is entitled to what is called match-in grant, it is a grant that is expected to encourage the CDA to embark on a project, because such a project is self-help project to be completed by the funds they (the community) have raised. The condition for releasing this grant is that if the CDA is unable to complete the project, they forward a request to the local government chairman which will now be approved for the fund to be released at the local government level. The one at the state level is called grant in aids, which is a situation where the local government release fund and such fund is not able to complete the project. It is expected that the state via the CDA with a recommendation of the local government, releases funds to complete the project. Such grant given to the CDA by the state is what we call grant in aids and it is supposed to be enjoyed from federal government but the major support for the CDA is from the local government and the state government (KII Male, 50 years)

Some executive members of the high performing CDA confirmed this gesture by the government;

We obtained grant from the government on the community hall but it could only do little. (IDI Male, 68 years)

Like I said the other time to achieve anything it is funds, you need money for development projects but to the best of my knowledge the senator, Oluremi Tinubu of Lagos central senatorial district gave each CDA money, as a takeoff grant for a project which is one hundred thousand naira (IDI Male, 57 years)

The bottom-up approach to Community Development in Lagos State through CDAs.

CDAs are now regarded as the fourth tier of the government due to their proximity to the grass root. The government liaise with CDAs as regards development projects required in their communities and before formulating policies. An executive member of a CDA who is also a CDC executive recounts;

..... the good thing is we are apolitical that is why the government is particular about our activities. Fifty Seven (57) CDC meet at least twice every month to discuss issues, we are pushing government to do things, and we have the right to accept or reject



projects based on its importance to our community.....We contribute in security, health, education etc. that is why we like (Governor) Ambode's Government, he ensures the CDAs and CDC has role to play in his government. He communicates with the CDA before he enacts any law. We respond our desire via feedback (IDI Male, 74 years)

Both key informants narrate;

They are the fourth tier of the government, we have the federal, state, local government then the CDA comes in, so they are the fourth tier of the government. They give the government feedbacks; they tell the government what is on ground, as in what they need like infrastructures, social amenities, so they give the local government the feedback to relay to the state government. Anything that the local government is involved in, they go through the CDAs to the grass root. During immunization exercise the health people do come here (the L.C.D.A) to seek the support of the CDA so they can penetrate more into the grass root, so they go through the CDA, they tell them they are coming for so,so,so, so they can sensitize the community and the community can come out and benefit from such programs (KII Male, 40 years).

About a month ago, every CDC chairman was given a special phone to make calls to the government officials at any time of the day on anything that happens in the area. All the details of the CDA officials are in a central database at the ministry of local government and community affairs under the special adviser on community affairs and communications. It has a very good implication to the CDA. The establishment of the Lagos state neighborhood watch are mandated to work directly with the CDA, to manage security challenges by the Lagos State Safety Corp partnering with the Nigerian police, with this, the crime rate has reduced (KII Male, 50 years).

Theme 2: Challenges faced by CDAs

Both the high and low performing CDAs are faced with similar challenges. Respondents from the two CDAs identified inadequate funds and unwillingness of most members to support the CDA financially as the major challenges experienced by CDAs. Other challenges include, unwillingness of cooperate bodies to partner with CDAs for cooperate social responsibilities and the government not living up to its responsibilities. However, the challenges are more proclaimed in the low performing CDA because of its mode of operation. An executive member of the low performing CDA narrates;

Street resident associations are not paying their dues to the CDA. It is the street associations that ought to pay to the CDA, but they don't pay their dues. So we find it very difficult to raise fund to complete ongoing projects. We wrote letter to the government for support but only one member of the house of assembly gave us fifty thousand naira. We have the challenge of scarcity of fund. Most street members are not paying their dues. CDA pays to CDC, CDC pays to state. CDA also pay to state, formally we pay five thousand naira but now we pay six thousand naira (annually), we pay one thousand naira to advisory committee, we've just paid (IDI Male, 74 years)

The executive and non-executive members of the resident associations in the low performing CDA reported the following;



Basically the challenges are still about the people.....there are times we needed to do projects just like getting transformer, I spent my personal money to see that we get it but I am yet to be reimbursed because some people are yet to pay their levies. We do say all fingers are not equal, but we have equal rights to vote and when it comes to meeting up with our responsibility for the community we fail in it. So the major challenge we always have in the association is that of funding (IDI Male, 50 years)

The major challenge faced by this association is lack of funds; if fund is available the association would be able to achieve so many things including the problem we have with security. Normally each house is to pay one thousand five hundred naira but hardly do we have four houses left paying the monthly due as at the last time I communicated with the financial secretary. If fund is available, surely this association with the leaders on board, would achieve so much (IDI Male, 34 years)

Similar problems abound in the high performing CDA, an executive recounts;

Community members find it very difficult to give out but if they are to give in (i.e. collect) they are comfortable with it. We pay one hundred and twenty five thousand naira to our security men monthly. We have five of them being paid twenty five thousand naira each monthly. We always have difficulty collecting the street due, on Monday we lock the gate which serves as awareness but on Tuesday we commence the collection. Some voluntarily pay the money but majority have to be forced to make payment (IDI Male, 68 years)

Another problem identified by resident associations is the scrap of the ‘compulsory’ monthly environmental sanitation in the state, which hinders them from having their regular monthly meeting, hitherto held on environmental sanitation days, due to the restriction of movement during this exercise. Despite the obstacles faced by these associations, certain means have been devised to ensure their survival. These strategies include; getting income from properties owned by the CDAs, receiving donations from committed individuals and enforcing the payment of dues.

DISCUSSIONS

Findings of this study revealed that CDAs are to a great extent effective in executing development projects. The high performing CDA recorded a number of successful development projects in the last three years which include the installation of community gates, employment of security guards, acquisition of a land to build a community hall, acquisition and installation of transformers among others. This aligns with the findings of Akinsoratan and Olujide (2007) that CDAs were involved in a number of development projects for the benefit of their members.

On the contrary, the low performing CDA could not point to any development project in the last three years, though, some of its street resident associations recorded some achievements which include recruiting security guards, installation of transformers and electric cables. The discrepancy in the performance of both CDAs could be attributed to their mode of operation. The high performing CDA operates as a single entity which allows it to have a grip on the participation of residents, while the low performing CDA operates as a central body to all the



‘street resident associations’ within it. However, the over-dependence of the low performing CDA on the ‘street resident associations’ inhibits it from having a direct relationship with the inhabitants within its jurisdiction, which has resulted in its low performance in executing development projects.

The findings of this study also revealed a bottom-up approach to community development in Lagos State. It demonstrates an established chain of communication between the government and CDAs being the closest group to the grass root. The CDA is regarded as the fourth tier of the government and it is backed by the enacted Community Development Associations law of Lagos State (2008), which gave CDAs recognition and the right to contribute in government policies and decision making. Government provides some level of financial support to the CDAs, but this is subject to the inability of the CDA to complete an ongoing project, which is known as ‘grant in aid’. The high performing CDA reported to have benefited from this gesture, though the grant received could do little in the completion of the project. This situation of inadequate financial support from the government faced by CDAs is corroborated by the findings of Shaibu (2014), which suggests that, governments’ contribution towards community development has been very insignificant as little impact has been recorded in terms of financial and technical aids for project execution, material provision for construction and rehabilitation of community facilities.

Finally, both the high and low performing CDAs identified inadequate funds and reluctance of most members to give financial support as the major challenges faced. This aligns with the findings of Okosun (2017) which revealed that the challenges of development associations include; low level of participation, political hindrances and bad governance, economic and political crisis, funding and logistics problems. Though, both CDAs have devised certain means of augmenting revenue generation. These coping strategies include property ownership and donations from generous residents.

CONCLUSION

Community Development Associations are regarded as the forth tier of government, and as such, they facilitate a bottom-up approach to community development in Lagos state. The enactment of the Lagos state Community Development Associations Law has consolidated the activities of the CDAs in carrying out their self-help roles. In line with the above findings, this study concludes that activities of CDAs have indeed complemented governments’ efforts in alleviating the hardship faced by citizens; although, not without certain setbacks such as those identified in this study.

We therefore recommend that executives of CDAs should engage in continuous sensitization of residents on the importance of community participation and that, social workers should assume their activism roles on behalf of CDAs to ensure that government increase its financial support to them, the implication of this to social work practice is reduced workload for social workers. More effective CDAs would translate to less strain for social workers in areas of socio-economic empowerment, family instability and domestic violence.



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