Chapter 23
Re–Branding Community Organizations for the Actualization of Development Goals in the Rural Communities in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Community organizations, also known as community-based organizations, are civil society and non-profit social organizations based in the community with the main thrust being benefiting their members and the community at large. Community organizations have their roots in the community members organizing themselves for needs identification and realization of development goals. They are a subset of the wider group of non-profit organizations. Community organizations operate with the locality to ensure the community with sustainable provisions of community-service and action. This chapter highlights some measures for making community organizations more active and alive in the community of operations.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCOURSE

The need for community organization for community development in any country the world over with particular reference to the Third World countries like Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. This is because community organizations have been playing significant roles from time immemorial. World Bank (2012) reported that about 80% of the national population in developing countries including Nigeria dwell in rural areas, and that majority of these people relied on local organizations for survival. In other words, well over 60 percent of Nigerians are said to be living and working in the rural communities, engaging in either farming or non-farming occupations with community organizations offering a lending hand (World Bank, 2012).

Rural communities and her citizens realized that they have to provide their basic needs through self-help and participatory mechanism by forming themselves into organizations. Many communities have bought this idea of self-participation through organizations in development and have on their own with marginal government support and assistance provided such amenities as access roads, bridges, community schools, community centres, hospitals and electricity to make life worth living in the rural settings (Oyelami, 2007).

Community organization involves the rural people in the whole process of rural development activities, from the early stage of problem identification to the stage of designing, implementing and evaluating of the community projects. It therefore entails that participatory development in community organization is a situation, whereby the beneficiaries are involved in planning, implementing, evaluating and sharing the benefits of the project (Osuji, 1993). Community organizations are therefore organizations set up by the community members themselves to facilitate and enhance speedy growth and development of the community. The major aim of forming community organization is to better the lots of the memberships and the community at large, in terms of providing for the basic needs for all in the community.

As a result of the successes of community organizations towards participatory and community development efforts, there is, therefore, the need for a reviewed thinking on how the community organizations particularly in the rural areas should be re-branded in the face of contemporary realities of development strive in Nigeria. This write-up, in essence, discusses such concepts as: community, community organization, features of community organization, roles of community organization, typologies of community organizations and how community organizations can be re-packaged to meet the contemporary challenges particularly in the rural areas of Nigeria.

COMMUNITY: THE DEFINING FEATURES

Community has been defined variously by different scholars, according to their own perception of what it entails, hence the concept is said to be nebulous. Some see community in the perspective of geography as human settlement; others define it in terms of goal, some as legal entity and others as solidarity, while other scholars see community as just a place of habitation. To this end, in the words of Osuji (2002), community refers to a group of people inhabiting a limited area, who have a sense of belonging together, and who through their organized relationship share and carry out activities in pursuit of their common interest. Osuji (2002) further maintained that a community is a group of people occupying or living in a geographical area, with common historical, political, economic and cultural ties and having feeling of belonging to one another and committed to specific goals. Anyanwu (1999) in his own view saw community as a social group, occupying a more or less defined geographical area and based on the feelings of what of its members have for one another. Hence, Osuji (2002) sum-up the definitions of community thus:

Community is a consciously identified population with common needs and interest, it may occupy a common physical space, engage in common activities, and have some forms of organization that provide or differentiation of functions, making it adaptive to its environment as a means of meeting common needs. Its components include individuals, groups, families and organizations within its population and the institution it forms to meet its needs. (p. 21)

In the same vein, Okafor, Onocha and Oyedeji (1987) described community as a group of mutually dependent people, living in a more or less

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