

# The Effect of Self-Help as a Productive Strategy for Sustainable Community Development in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** It is a well-known fact that is widely acknowledged that most communities in Nigeria have been neglected especially rural communities thereby suffering dearth of high quality human resource and infrastructural developments unlike their urban counterparts. Thus, this paper advocates that the available glimpse of development in Nigerian communities today and in time to come should be sustained, using the platform of self help strategy. This paper is tailored to verify the efficacy of self help as a veritable instrument for sustainable community development in Nigeria. It traces the spirit behind self help initiation, the foundation upon which it is predicated on, its nexus with sustainable community development, the achievements and prospects in it as a platform to ensure sustainable community development in Nigeria. It advocates provisions of basic modern human needs, mass mobilization and participation to ensure sustainable community development via self help efforts of the people. Furthermore, bottom-top approach anchored on felt/real need, functional education, development oriented values, and skills acquisitions are projected to stir the collective consciousness of the community people towards embarking on the desired change and its maintenance (sustenance) via self help cohesion and solidarity. The paper concludes that self help is an indispensable resort for achieving sustainable community development in Nigeria.

**KEYWORDS:** Community, Self Help, Productive Strategy, Sustainable Development

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## I. INTRODUCTION (CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION)

Quoting Obodoechi (2009:170) at a length for the beautiful background picture he painted about self help, which he posits thus:

“One of the most significant attributes of pre-colonial Africa societies was their regular resort to collective community effort as a means of meeting common challenges. For many centuries, it was through this indigenous arrangement that communities built fortifications for their collective security, built roads and bridges to facilitate transportation and cleared forest to make way for farms. Long before the colonial administrators came with their “development plans” many Nigerian societies had perfected mechanisms by which their people could identify common needs, mobilize the human and material resources for meeting such needs and execute collectively adopted programmes of action for achieving their goals. These arrangements, among other things, helped to install in young members of the community, the spirit of self help and reliance frequently reinforcing the idea that members of each community were the primary architects of their own destiny”.

Leveraging on the above background, self help as the name implies entails helping or assisting one’s self with the bid to be better in life, achieve some specific goals, overcome unwanted situation/problem, to advance or improve from one stage to another better stage. Therefore, self help in community development is a conceived strategy for achieving community development goals set by the people and implemented by the people and for the people towards engendering collective social progress, emancipation, enhancement of standard of living and general well-being of the communities. In the view of Igboeli (1992), ‘self-help’ means strategies that induce progress in rural societies, not all of which involves action by governments. It could be related to an individual who alone has the resources to implement a project or projects to satisfy the basic needs of a community. It could also apply to co-ordinated efforts within a community to select and execute local and economic and social programmes addressed to the development needs of a community.

Self help takes diverse forms and shapes depending on the peculiar needs, challenges, setbacks, problems and prospects facing difference communities. Hence difference communities engage in difference self help projects and programs towards achievement of predetermined goals that will enhance the general welfare of the people. Self help strategy is usually the last resort that communities embark on for development following the glaring neglect of rural areas by the government in the centre and states on distribution of developmental infrastructure. Therefore, for communities mainly in rural areas to receive urgent attention on their dire needs

and challenges, the people must be galvanized and mobilized to contribute resources (money, materials, and manpower) to initiate and execute projects and programs based on the real/felt needs of the people towards ameliorating the excruciating human misery prevalent in rural communities, which if not, the people will continue to suffer and languish due to government discrimination and neglect on the plight, sorrowful, dejected, and inhuman living conditions of the most rural communities in Nigeria. According to Chikeleze (2012), beneficiaries of development interventions also need to be given appropriate opportunities to define their problems and how they feel they can best be helped. Otherwise, well meaning efforts by development agencies may actually make little impact in the lives of needy communities.

Many at times, state government partners with communities to support them technically in the areas of providing professionals, and finances to ensure that self help efforts of the various communities succeed with a view to achieving sustainable community development. In the same vein, United Nations, views self help strategic efforts of communities as ‘the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of the governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the communities, to integrate these communities in the life of the nation and enable them to contribute fully to national progress’ (U.N.O., 1956). Similarly, Ohagwu Chinwe (2010:285) aligns with the preceding perspective from UNO and posits that there is nothing new in people willing to work together for their common benefit. What is new is that governments should be organizing themselves to stimulate the self help effort of the people and should be providing technical and financial assistance in order to make such effort effective and to associate the people generally with government activities at all levels.

On the other hand, sustainable community development is the judicious implementation and wise use of projects and programs deployed in communities without hampering or jeopardizing the ability of the future generations from meeting their own needs due to ecological, economical, and socio-political consequences of today’s development and other associated human activities on the community ecosystem. Sustainable development, according to Bruntland Commission, is development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission, 1987). To achieve sustainable community development, the people being the beneficiaries of the development deployed in their environment will have to play critical roles in determining the success or failure since they are the ones supposedly to co-initiate, co-implement, use, and collaborate with government to protect the development, if they want to sustain it. But if they do not want to sustain it, they will abuse it, misuse it, or even vandalize it, whether it is deployed by the sole efforts of their self help strategy or in partnership with government or development agencies or good spirited individuals (philanthropist). Thus, self help strategic efforts of the people are very critical in ensuring sustainable community development. Chikeleze (2012) aligned with the above view when he succinctly asserts that evidence shows that where government initiates and implements development programmes without substantial input (financially and otherwise) from the community, the responsibility of the community to sustain such development projects is often compromised.

Sustainable community development is also strategic in nature in the sense that it ensures that the present of development in communities does not erode the existing healthy social fabrics; values, mores, culture, institutions, the base and the superstructure upon which the society stands on and thrives as unifying factors in engendering social cohesion and progress. Sustainable Community Development (SCD) involves integrated community development approach; therefore, it seeks to mutually harmonise all factors, elements, both present and future impacts of developmental activities in communities, with the view to avoid negative consequences. It also advocates coordinated interrelationships on weighing and analyzing the long term effects of the gains and the possible losses in order to strike a balanced advantageous future position on activities of man in the ecosystem as a result of development. Ayichi (1995) opined that sustainable development is a comprehensive concept, embracing all facets of human life.

Sustainable community development has integrative perspective approach which Ijere (1992) in Ayichi (1995) succinctly pointed out that it seeks to integrate the ruralities into the economic and political mainstream of the nation. It also entails government and community cooperative participation in the provisioning of better health, education, rural infrastructure, in such a coordinated and simultaneous manner to enhance the overall welfare of the rural dwellers. In the light of the above, it is obvious that sustainable community development widely cuts across every facet, strategy, approach, and factor in community development, therefore, it is integrative, interdependence and interwoven in a connected web of complex intrigues that shape and influence one another. The interplay cannot be ignored when in pursuit of genuine community development which must be sustainable.

At this juncture, it is noteworthy to mention that sustainable community development has its foundation on the enthronement of social justice, equity, fair play, participation, and consensus in society in the business of development. Leveraging on this, Batie (1992) in Ayichi (1995) identified three pillars of such society as: economic stability, ecological stability, and political stability.

Moreover, to achieve sustainable community development, the following questions must be addressed in man's quest for development:

- i. How to avoid negative environmental consequences that accompanies development, thereby pointing to the crucial need for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of development activities in the ecosystem?
- ii. How to avoid creating problems for the future generations while trying to solve today's problems of development?
- iii. How to ensure that development achieved today will not fizzle out tomorrow (development continuum or incrementalism perspective of development), or go moribund?
- iv. How to protect man, the environment and other natural resources (ecosystem friendliness) from the adverse effect of development?
- v. How to avoid extinction of both renewable and non renewable natural resources while exploring and harnessing the environment?
- vi. How to maximize the proceeds of development and minimize to the barest possible level the intrigues, interplay, chain reaction and adverse domino effect of development?

However, a genuine answer to the above questions by virtue of all variables in development being factored in and successfully controlled to man's present and future advantage is a gateway to ensuring sustainable development, both in communities or elsewhere.

## **II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on the "basic needs approach" which provisions, availability, accessibility, utilization and sustainability are paramount for community corporate existence, survival, social progress, and national integration in order to make life meaningful and worth living in a given geographical location. Man is gregarious, and thus a social being that is wired to eke out living from the environment. Hence the environment is subject to man's quest to harness the resources of the environment with the bid to providing basic modern facilities/needs like potable water, electricity, macadamized roads, security, employment, quality education, good hospital, livable house, internet - bandwidth etc depending on man's technical know-how based on his ability to manipulate the forces of nature and the environment, using the laws of nature and science and technology at his disposal in his quest for development.

According to Ohagwu (2010:75) basic needs approach is a viable alternative to the classical development theory because it is predicated on the need for greater participation of the indigenous population in the production process through greater use of the knowledge and technology they can control. Obodoechi (2009:249-250) also asserts that basic human needs are those strongest demands in human existence. It is made up of three components, namely: Food, Clothing, and Shelter. He further posits that human existence cannot go on without the minimal provision of these three elements. However, we should also appreciate that the basic human needs do not exist in a vacuum, for life to be meaningful, the provision of other facilities like education, hospital, electricity, good roads etc, must be taken into account. In today's global equation, there is a paradigm shift that basic human needs are no longer food, clothing, and shelter, but the availability and utilization of all necessary modern facilities for comfortable living and subjugation of the environment to man's quest in the bid to have total control and be in charge of his life and environment, not living for mere survival.

## **III. PERSPECTIVES FOR SELF HELP STRATEGY**

1. **Exigency for corporate existence and survival:** Humans being social oriented creatures live in colony, and engage in mutual and corporate activities for survival, social progress and prosperity. The exigency for corporation ensures social progress that enhances collective benefits which cannot be achieved on chaotic individualism. Thus, various communities have three distinct reasons and justifications to come together under the platform of 'self help', that is, the initiation and execution of projects and programmes by the communities, and for the benefits of the people, as a base to support and enhance the survival instinct, mutual co-existence and general welfare of the communities via the provisions of basic human modern needs like road, hospital, school, electricity etc, using the window of self help as the available and viable productive strategy.

However, the second reason and justification for communities engaging in self help strategy as their last resort to achieve development is due to government neglect of rural communities in the allocation and distribution of the wealth of the nation, thereby, leading to the wide gap in rural-urban disparity. Moreover, to bridge this ugly gap in rural-urban dichotomy and give life meaning, communities take their fate and future in their own hands having seen the deliberate, lopsided and consistent neglect by various governments in provisions of development projects and programs.

The third reason and justification for self help is the nature of development itself which is people-oriented or centred, if it is to survive and perform its social objectives, that is realizable through sustainable development approach. According to Chikeleze (2012), what is most critical in community development is to

find viable ways of guaranteeing the sustainability of development efforts after the intervention activities have ended. It is common knowledge that a lot of benefits accruing to intervention efforts are short lived resulting in waste of efforts and resources deployed to such development projects.

2. **Mass awareness and mobilization perspective:** for self help to be ushered in communities there will be high level of mass awareness and campaign to arouse mass consciousness and induce pitiable feelings (felt need) in the people about the neglect in the communities which will instigate the desire to change the deplorable status quo of the misery by gaining access to the critical mass of the populace who will campaign and champion the self help efforts. At the incubation stage for self help, it calls for effective leadership, usually charismatic leadership that can easily galvanize the people, resources and action for the realization of desired change in the communities.

3. **Mass participation perspective:** the awareness creation as in the above serves as an eye opener to the communities who will then mobilize and campaign for transformation thereby leading to their participation – willingness involvement of the people in taking active part in collective activities designed to better the living conditions of the communities through self help. For self help to succeed there must be conscious awareness creation by the members of the communities through which they will be mobilized to pave way for active participation that will bring the desired change into reality. According to Fung (2004) in Chikeleze (2012), empowered participation of community members in programmes that address their felt need, is the key element to successful community development. The essence of creating awareness and mobilization is to gain participation which usually starts from the people by: ‘asking questions like; what shall we do?’ ‘What is the solution or way out?’ ‘How did we get to this backwardness, or lack?’ These questions are eye opener as a result of the critical mass of the members of the communities gaining critical consciousness on the fact that the communities are lagging behind.

4. **Self help solution perspective:** the answers to the questions above are the foundations upon which self help strategy as a viable option for sustainable community development is birthed and predicated on. At this stage, the populace accepts self help as their last resort for sustainable community development, whether the development originates from the local people or outsiders, thus it must have element of participation of the people, if it is to be successfully executed and sustained in the long run. Obodoechi (2009:173) aligned with the above view when he posits that community development program is designed to rekindle the self-help spirit among local communities and motivate their people towards greater emphasis on self-reliance. In some part of the country, as we pointed out earlier, particularly the urban and the semi-urban communities, the spirit of self help has been progressively eroded and the people have tended to look up to government as the sole agent for development. This trend was particularly fuelled by the illusion of an oil boom, which availed government of enormous resources.

#### **IV. ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF SELF HELP**

1. Development centres on people by virtue of creation and usage thus, the people must take part in its activities as the beneficiaries.
2. Self help projects and programmes and policies entrench sustainable community development. Thus, it is exigent to involve people at all stages of it to guarantee success.
3. Self help is democratic in the sense that the people are willingly involved, not coerced into self help projects, or neglected and not informed to participate; which is part of the root cause of the origin of self help strategy.
4. Projects and programmes of self help are often not abandoned before completion or after commissioning like we see in most government initiated and abandoned projects defacing every nook and cranny. Therefore, government projects usually lack continuity and sustainability while self help projects enjoy continuity and sustainability as a result of it being closer to the people (owners’ perspective) who take good care of them with sense of maintenance culture which is arguably lacking in government projects in Nigeria.
5. Self help projects address the real/felt need or ascertained need of the people unlike the government projects in most communities that have no effect on the felt needs and in most cases do not address the genuine or essential needs of the people (White elephant projects).
6. Self help ensures corporate existence and mutual survival of communities, thus it engenders social cohesion, solidarity, and progress.

#### **ARGUMENTS AGAINST SELF HELP**

1. Self help is exploitative in nature because the people who contribute to finance it are also fulfilling their own part of financial obligation, civic responsibility and social contract theory by payment of taxes and levies and rates to government. Thus, government should provide the needs of the rural communities like their urban counterparts, not pushing the responsibility of rural community development back to the rural people who are already over burdened with poverty and glaring neglect in the allocation and execution of infrastructure.
2. Self help alone cannot provide the basic modern needs of the communities, especially the basic modern needs like electricity, tarred roads, Internet bandwidth etc.
3. Self help projects are usually shoddy when compared with government executed projects.
4. Rural communities' dwellers usually lack financial, professional and technical prowess required for the execution of modern basic needs, using self help strategy.
5. The candid efforts of the tax force committee commissioned to collect money agreed to pay for self help projects at times turn into warring group among various communities thereby leading to loss of lives, property, thus endangering relative peaceful co-existence in the affected communities.
6. Leadership tussle and financial recklessness characterize self help organizations or groups.
7. Self help projects are usually over politicized especially in location of projects among the various participating communities.

## **V. THE NEXUS BETWEEN SELF HELP STRATEGY AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

1. **Subject matter discourse of community development nexus:** the first nexus between self help strategy and sustainable community development is traced to have its background from the subject matter discourse – community development. Therefore, community development is the link between self help strategy and entrenchment of sustainable development in communities. Community development is the link that bounds self help strategy and sustainable community development together in a mutual interrelationship geared towards developing the communities.

For clarity purposes, let's review a few definitions of community/rural development to guide our perspective and for better understanding of the harmonious relationships and roles self help strategy and sustainable community development play in ensuring durable and portable development.

According to S.K.T. Williams (1978) in Obodoechi (2009), rural development is defined as: "sustained attempts to transfer the rural areas in such a way that the problems in rural areas, which make life very difficult and uncomfortable, are minimized to ensure improved living conditions".

However, World Bank (1975) defined rural development "as a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people – the rural poor". Rural development according to T.R. Battern in Abah (2005) is a process during which the people in the small community, first through discussion, define their goals and objectives and plan and act together to satisfy them.

Analysis of the above definitions of rural development shows the existence of nexus, semblance, intertwine nature, coordinated involvement and rapport between self help strategy and sustainable community development. It also exposed that rural development is strategic efforts of either the people of the communities or joint efforts of the people and the government, or even development agencies or individuals, which must bring positive change to make life better, and adheres to sustainability dimension (that is, the mutuality of the nexus between self help strategy and sustainable community development. Thus, Self help strategy and sustainable community development are mutually inseparable in the quest for development.

2. **Multivariate nexus:** community development is a multi-purpose and multi-disciplinary subject that cuts across various fields such as, agriculture, engineering, politics, economics, sociology, education, and environmental management. These specialized areas or sectors in community development have to be treated jointly in pursuit of community development, because what happens to one sector will have a multiplier effect or at least trigger a chain reaction in other sectors, thus they are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development in one sector or all the sectors, the development must not have negative effect or backwash effect in another sector that is at the receiving end, otherwise it will not achieve sustainable community development which depends on how development is perceived, and impacts on the people as the user and as the beneficiaries of development.

Multivariate dimension of community development is presumed to be the ecology and anatomy of sustainable community development which has its success or failure on the impacts of development on the people and the environment, using analytical model like Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of development on the ecosystem to strike a balance to ensure that development in one sector does not invariably harm or jeopardize the other sectors, does not harm the people and the environment now or in future.

3. **Integrated nexus:** community development is not to be pursued in isolation thus all elements, strategies, sectors, approaches, theories and intrigues have to be factored in and addressed holistically as a system to ensure sustainable community development. Using integrated dimension to establish a nexus between self help strategy and sustainable community development, the human element of development which advocates involvement (peoples' participation) requires attention as it is the people that will at least guard developmental infrastructure deployed in their communities thereby ensuring sustainable community development via protection of those projects and their judicious uses. Integration nexus is akin to multivariate, however, integration is bringing to bear the scattered, neglected and isolated issues of community development to the front burner, to assume equal importance and treatment in the national scheme of things regarding development.

4. **Capacity building nexus:** this is discovering or finding out immediate or potential problem areas, or developing abilities, skills, attitudes, experience and knowledge for prospective enhancement towards gaining sustainability in human and material resources deployed in communities. It is a conscientious efforts geared towards effective and efficient utilization of community resources with the view to maximally sustain the development and the resources being used, without creating adverse effect to man and the environment.

Capacity building has dual purposes which are present and futuristic oriented perspectives. The present perspective of capacity building implies that it takes capacity to initiate and execute community developments/projects using self help strategy, while the futuristic perspective also implies that it takes capacity to effectively and efficiently utilize the gains of development and to conserve it (sustainable community development) for present and continuous future use, with possible improvements. To make it simpler, it takes capacity to build, to utilize what is built; it takes capacity to maintain, repair, service, preserve, secure, and even improve on what is built thereby ensuring sustainability in community development. Capacity building guarantees efficient and effective social service delivery in development. Thus, self help strategy assist the people to build capacity which ushers in or ensures sustainable community development.

According to Ezeigwe (2011) capacity building is a very important activity that enhances organizational growth. It involves identification of problem areas in an organization, institution of government or a nation and the subsequent investment in human capacity in order to arrest such challenges. Olaopa (2011) in Ezeigwe (2011) asserts that capacity is "the process and means through which national government and local communities develop the necessary skills and expertise to manage their environment and natural resources in a sustainable manner within their daily activities." In the same vein, Obodoechi (2010) buttressing on capacity asserts that capacity building activities goes beyond projects and includes policies, programmes, long term perspective and consensus building. This is so because human resource development in itself is not sufficient for capacity building, there are needs to be in place well functioning institutions and enabling environment to make such resources effective for the management of development and for the achievement of sustainable results.

From the above, it is obvious that the nexus between self help strategy and sustainable community development is also achieved using capacity building dimension which encompasses development and deployment of effective and efficient human resource, strong, functional and reliable institutional platform and enabling environment to drive the capacity.

## **VI. BASIC SELF HELP STRATEGIC TOOLS THAT GUARANTEES SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

1. **Education:** this is a veritable tool and indispensable weapon against ignorance, stark illiteracy that is the bane of individual and social progress. Education is a sharp and useful tool that changed every society from primitive; underdeveloped and rural to developed and urban communities. Therefore, education is undeniable instrument for the realization of self help strategy towards sustainable community development. Education brings about knowledge, and we are in the era of knowledge economy which rural communities cannot be distant from in the bid to achieve sustainable rural development.

However, education according to Acha (1995) is defined as the development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities of an individual to enable him function effectively and happily in the society. The individual has to be helped to maximize his mental, emotional and physical capabilities which will be beneficial to him and the society to which he belongs.

Quoting National Teachers' Institute at a length for a general insight and better appreciation of the roles of education on development, it says: *the prime place of education in the development efforts of nations has never been doubted the world over. Various nations, including Nigeria have for long been making efforts to develop this sector for optimal development. Although, much has not been achieved in this regard, a lot more needs to be done so that the ever-increasing challenges of our time and the time to come can be effectively confronted. In Nigeria, for example, the challenges have been that of poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy and general*

*underdevelopment. How we are to tackle these problems will reflect on the value and commitment we attach to education, which according to professor Baikie “is the biggest industry that touches on every fabric of our human endeavour”.*

2. **Skills acquisitions:** technical know-how, creative ingenuity, disposition, learnt abilities etc are the back bone for achievable self help strategic efforts that will be sustained. Thus, rural people must be trained to acquire relevant skills and build capacity for effective contribution towards sustainable community development. Njoku Z.C. (1995) affirms that it is a truism that sustainable rural development can only be achieved by getting the rural dwellers involved at all the stages of development process, it is an imperative that the attitudes, knowledge, competence and skills of rural dwellers should be improved so as to equip and motivate them to participate in the development of their communities. By doing this a sustainable rural development will be achieved.

3. **Wealth creation:** no self help strategy can succeed without money; for finance or capital as a resource must be mobilized and invested into a venture, project, business etc before expectation of dividend becomes fruitful and gainfully realistic, thereby enhancing living conditions of the people by virtue of the increase in the per capita traceable to the yields (returns) on the investments made. Agriculture, trade, and artisanship that dominate rural occupation in various communities should be made viable and lucrative to enhance income generation that will give the communities the capacities for sustainable development via developing strong financial empowerment and freedom. Therefore, building strong economic base and ability in the local people is a self help strategic tool that is sine qua non to achieving sustainable development. This advocates creation of conducive economic activities to thrive in the various communities, using trade and commerce to industrialize the rural areas in conjunction with harnessing and exploring all other relevant theories of rural development and integration approach for transformation/improvement of standard of living of the people.

4. **Positive attitude and values:** behavioral or relational dimension of development posits that people's attitude, culture, character, tradition, behavior, life style, value systems etc must be receptive and positive to development, not repulsive. For self help strategy to succeed, the attitude, culture, tradition etc of the people that are repugnant to development and modernization should be discarded using self help platform to enable sustainable development to thrive in the communities. Sustainable development has values that must be appreciated, inculcated and preserved by the people in building their self help strategies for viable social progress in communities. Njoku (1995) concur with the above view and asserts that considering the high level of illiteracy among our rural dwellers coupled with their cultural inertia, lack of adequate knowledge of their environment and lack of the skills needed to exploit and manipulate the environment to their benefit, it is extremely difficult to get the rural dwellers involved in the development of their communities.

5. **Health creation:** there is no doubt that health is the first instrument for development. Thus, healthy life style or living must be encouraged in the communities to enable the people to be sound mentally, emotionally, and physically. Conventional healthcare should be allowed to take the centre stage of communities' health, not medical care that has been concentrated on over the years with little results that are immeasurable when compared with the resources sunk into it. Michael Olisa (1992) arguing in favour of healthcare over medical care in communities posits a new approach which is to de-emphasise rural medical care and emphasise rural health care i.e. concentrate on radical change of those conditions which permanently make rural population potential sufferers of a very wide range of diseases. The new approach will include four major thrusts – public health education, drug education, food education and health care campaigns. The interesting point about all of them is that the financial and personnel resources needed for implementing them may be – indeed are – much less than the resources needed to implement effective medicare in the communities involved. The major step needed is to mobilize the agencies – schools, churches, local government councils, age-grades, title groups – which are close to the daily lives of the rural population and which command their attention if not their confidence, and involve those agencies in the new approaches to rural health service. Nevertheless, healthcare and medical care should be adequately deployed and made accessible and affordable to the people in the communities to safeguard their lives.

6. **Harmonious and peaceful co-existence:** no meaningful development can take place without peace, love and unity let alone sustaining the tempo of the development in communities where the atmosphere of rancor, acrimony, disunity, war etc. pervades the scene. Hence people in communities must embrace peace if development and its sustenance will be achieved.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This paper asserts that self help strategy is a viable tool used by various communities either separately or jointly to propagate sustainable development. Self help could also be in partnership with development agents or public spirited individuals or groups who provides succor to alleviate scourges in communities thereby improving or transforming the conditions and lives of the people. Therefore, self help strategy is an

indispensable element in building sustainable community development. Hence, for community development to be achieved and sustained, it must be people oriented or centred right from the period of conception or initiation to implementation, usage, repair, maintenance and preservation/protection. Self help strategy is democratic in approach and indeed touches the core needs of the communities' dwellers thereby engendering collective welfare and social advancement of the people. It also enhances capacity building of the people thereby ensuring sustainable development. To this effect, self help strategy is the road map for the smooth operation of sustainable community development which improves the standard of living of the people and ensures social prosperity and harmony.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Whatever development project or program embarked on by government or development agencies for communities should be adequately blended with consultation and participatory element of self help strategy to ensure its sustainability.
2. Policies to encourage self help strategy in pursuit of sustainable community development should be embarked on such as, mandatory training of host communities on the uses, benefits, minor technical requirements for repair/maintenance/service of infrastructure deployed in villages/communities for efficiency and effective maxima utilization. Bottom-top policy approach is also suggested as the sure way to address the felt/real needs of the communities instead of the supposedly 'thought need' that is government initiative and directive in nature, thus it usually does not bring lasting solution to the needs of the people acclaimed to service.
3. Adequate reorientation and campaigns should be carried out to sensitize and enlighten both government officials and the people on the nexus and benefits of self help as essential tool for sustainable community development.
4. There should be collective efforts by the government and the communities to ensure the creation of enabling environment and adequate provisions of the basic self help strategic tools to guarantee sustainable community development.

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