

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES' ENGAGEMENT OF CITIZENS
AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN
BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA**

BY

HARRY YERIKEMA

harry.yerikema@iithyenagoa.edu.ng

Department of General Studies

International Institute of Tourism & Hospitality

Yenagoa, Bayelsa State

&

JONATHAN E. OGHENEKOHWO, PhD

(Professor of Managerial Economics of Adult Education)

jonathan.oghenekohw1@ndu.edu.ng

Department of Educational Foundations

Niger Delta University

Wilberforce Island

Bayelsa State

Abstract

This study focused on the engagement of citizens by community development committees for socioeconomic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. It was motivated by the apparent non-inclusion of citizens by their community development committees and a perceived inability of the community development committees to galvanise citizens of their communities in deliberative civic engagement for socioeconomic development. The study adopted the correlational research design. The target population for the study was 3,684 officials of community development committees, representatives of youth groups and community leaders of 118 communities in the eight (8) Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 368 using Taro Yamene's formula. The research instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged "Community Development Committees' Engagement of Citizens and Socioeconomic Development of Rural Communities Scale" (CDCECSDRCS) with a reliability coefficient (r) of 0.80 using test-retest. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyse the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to analyse hypotheses. Findings revealed that non-inclusion of citizens of communities by their respective community development committees is one of the major causes of low socioeconomic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State. Active engagement of community citizens by their respective community development committees significantly contributed to the

socioeconomic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State. The study concluded that there was a significant correlation between community development committees' engagement of citizens and socioeconomic development. It was then recommended that there should be major sensitisation exercises in all rural communities in Bayelsa State on the need to establish a well functional and transparent community development committees, and well-furnished meeting points of deliberations for officials of the community development committees and citizens in all communities of Bayelsa State to encourage community members to be actively engaged in the development of their communities.

Introduction

With the strategy of development in Nigeria, the concept of citizens' engagement in rural development is increasingly becoming an important instrument for mobilising resources and organising the rural people to take more interest in providing for their well-being. The Federal, State, and Local Governments feel that there is an inherent imperative in traditional democratic practices to warrant the engagement of rural people actively in the decisions that affect and shape their lives. Because of this feeling, the current government proposals for rural development contain various forms of statement aimed at maximising public engagement and initiative that are essential recipes for sustainable human development (Yerikema, 2025).

The process of rural development can be more sustainable when all the members of the family and community in general are involved. Therefore, rural development should be an important concern for developing countries like Nigeria, to attain economic, social, and political development; and increased capacities of the people (Tamuno & Iroh in Yerikema, 2025; Oni, 2015). This revealed that ineffectiveness of rural development initiatives in Bayelsa State and Nigeria in general is associated with the lack of citizens' engagement in the identification of development problems, designing and execution of projects and programmes (Oni, 2015).

The implementation of socio-economic enhancement infrastructure in rural areas is grossly inadequate. Laah *et al.* in Yerikema (2025) observed that it is a consensus among rural developers that engagement is an important determinant of success in project performance and sustainability. This engagement in most cases is facilitated as group dynamics for positive intervention as encapsulated in the formation of Community Development Committees (CDCs) in both rural and urban settings.

Rationale for Citizens' Engagement

The idea behind citizens' engagement is that citizens should have some powers over the decisions that affect their lives. Citizens' engagement requires an active, intentional dialogue between citizens and public decision makers. Citizens' engagement is a top-down initiative and is instated by a governmental body such as a city or a town. With citizens' engagement, cities involve citizens in the decision-making process of public policies. To do so, they must provide them with tools to consult and access public information, discuss with elected representatives such as community development committee and monitor the implementation of the projects. Consequently, if a city aims to engage with its citizens, it must integrate this engagement to its entire governance strategy. Only then, citizens' engagement becomes a formalised procedure delimited by rules established by the city (Lodewijckx, 2020).

Brown and Wocha (2017) stressed that citizens' engagement indicates an active role for the community, leading to significant control over decision. In another view, Brown and Wocha asserted that citizens' engagement entails decision-making in a rural development process which enables the communities, families and individuals take up roles that would enable them develop capacities to make meaningful contributions towards their welfare and development. Furthermore, they opined that citizens' engagement is the process where the public participate at different levels regarding societal goals to exert significant influence over decisions in the allocation of resources towards improving the rural quality of life.

Citizens' engagement is also defined as the creation of opportunities to enable all members of a community to actively contribute to and influence the development process and to share equitably in the fruits of development (Yerikema, 2025). Egenti in Yerikema (2025) likewise defined citizens' engagement as the involvement of community members in initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation; stages of developmental programmes at the grassroots level. It has been observed by several authors that citizens' engagement is the most important condition for sustainable development. Citizens' engagement is one of the key ingredients of an empowered community. Citizens' engagement in rural development process is an important element and a sure way to speedy socioeconomic transformation of the rural communities in Bayelsa State and Nigeria in general; and thus, is well documented in development studies. Indeed, the role of citizens' engagement in rural development cannot be over-emphasised. It is

obvious that citizens' engagement can be successful in cases where the community has genuinely been part of the process (Yerikema, 2025).

Role of Community Development Committee

Community development committee (CDC) according to Ofuoku in Yerikema (2025) is a group of elected officials of a community, for the purpose of coordinating the self-help development activities of that community. He further explained that the emphasis on the role of CDCs is that of mobilising the rural community dwellers for the purpose of overcoming their development problems and needs, the problems of change, as they know the importance of desirable change. In line with the above, Rahimi in Yerikema (2025) reiterated that in the community, community development committees learn to analyse community priorities, problems and assess their needs. At the same time, they are also the institutions most capable agent for facilitating the determination of solutions and implementing the most appropriate responses. Only with the meaningful engagement of community development committees can development be truly genuine.

The government of Bayelsa State recognises community development committees as the primary service delivery instruments for rural development (Arugu & Anam in Yerikema, 2025). CDCs could facilitate the implementation of other rural development projects. The establishment of one community development committee per community is a catalyst for rural development. The formation of community development committees has brought many changes in rural areas, for instance, many resources have been generated to be utilised by conducting successful sub-projects (Rahimi in Yerikema, 2013). Similarly, Brown and Wocha (2017) revealed that citizens' engagement has been identified as effective driver of rural development in emerging economies while community development committees (CDCs) are key players in implementing rural development programmes in communities.

To many scholars, development through CDCs is premised on the idea that every community member would want to engage because the kinship and lineage relationship within a community evoke a spirit of togetherness as well as that of homogeneity and harmony. For others, engagement with community development committees for the purpose of development has implications for equity, representation, and voice, and is thus a realisation of the long-awaited paradigm shift in social development thinking: from direct empowerment of the people to

engagement of the people in decision-making toward their empowerment. In contemporary development discourses, CDCs is advocated as a basic development strategy for attracting development to community (Agba, *et al.* in Yarikema, 2025). The community development committees (CDCs) should be an integral part of any rural development programme because of their closeness to people and the criteria for their appointment, selection and/or election in most communities.

Statement of the Problem

With an estimated population of 2,278,000 people (NPC, 2016), and a low level of development, Bayelsa State is yet to utilise and maximise her potentials; and non-engagement of citizens by their respective community development committees in the development process of their communities and the State in general, has been identified as one of the banes to attaining this feat. Bayelsa State is said to be highly underdeveloped as the State is characterised by low level of industrial development, high unemployment rate, poor health facilities, high infant mortality rate; public corruption, deteriorated social institutions; and lacking virtually in basic amenities such as healthcare delivery centres, road network, housing, viable schools and so on (Oyebamiji & Yarikema, 2016; Yarikema & Okafor, 2022; Yarikema, 2025). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in its 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index report, indicated that 88.5% of the Bayelsa State's population experiences multidimensional poverty (Premium Times, November 2, 2023; The Cable, November 2, 2023; Punch, November 3, 2023). This means that a large proportion of the State's residents are deprived across various indicators like health, education, living standards, employment, and security. The State which is in the heart of the Niger Delta is rich in petroleum and other mineral resources and contributes 23.4% of total national crude oil production and about 40% of national crude oil and gas (report.bayelsacommission.org, 2023; Akpan, 2019). Going by this record, the State is said to be one of the most purportedly developed states in Nigeria; yet in reality, the State is underdeveloped in all ramifications as it is one of the least developed states in Nigeria. To promote socioeconomic development of Bayelsa State, there is the need for active engagement of its people through community development committees that will empower the people to make right decisions in the areas of socioeconomic growth.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What is the influence of community development committees' engagement of citizens on social development in rural communities in Bayelsa State?
2. What is the influence of community development committees' engagement of citizens on economic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided this study.

Ho₁. There is no significant relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and social development of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

Ho₂. There is no significant relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and economic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

Methodology

The study adopted the cross-sectional correlational design. This design was adopted because of its ability to only test the relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and socioeconomic development of rural areas in Bayelsa State, and the difficulty in accessing the respondents under study because the design has to do with one time collection of data. The areas of study were Nembe, Sagbama, Southern Ijaw and Yenagoa Local Government Areas of Bayelsa State. The population of the study consisted of all officials of community development committees, officials of youth groups and community leaders in selected communities in the above Local Government Areas. The target population for this study was 3,684 officials of community development committees, officials of youth groups and community leaders of one hundred and eighteen (118) communities in the above local government areas; 759 from Nembe, 707 from Sagbama, 1,066 from Southern Ijaw and 1,152 from Yenagoa. The sample choice for the study included all officials of community development committees, officials of youth groups and community leaders in selected communities of the above local government areas. Ten percent (10%) of the sample choice was selected across the one hundred and eighteen (118) communities in the selected four (4) local government areas using Taro Yamene's formula [$n = N/(1 + Ne^2)$]; where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the margin of error] to give a sample size of three hundred and

sixty-eight (368) officials of community development committees, representatives of youth groups and community leaders. The sampling technique adopted in this research was proportionate random sampling technique. Proportionate random sampling technique was adopted to give equitable opportunity for fair representation of each category of respondents (See Table 1 below). The research instrument used for data collection in this study was structured questionnaire tagged “Community Development Committees’ Engagement of Citizens and Socioeconomic Development of Rural Communities Scale” (CDCECSDRCS). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A consisted of demographic data; and section B, consisted of two sub-sections or clusters (social development and economic development) of twenty (20) items (ten items per sub-section) designed to test the hypotheses. The questionnaire is a four-point rating scale of ‘strongly agree’ (4), ‘agree’ (3), ‘disagree’ (2) and ‘strongly disagree’ (1). A criterion mean of 2.5 was used as the basis for decision-making. Any item with mean score of 2.5 and above was agreed, while items below the mean score of 2.5 were disagreed. The instrument was first administered on twenty (20) members of community development committees, youth leaders, and community leaders in selected communities in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, who were not involved in the study and were not part of the sampled population. The instrument was re-administered on the same members of the above groups after two weeks. The scores were taken and the correlation between the two scores was calculated using test-retest method and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis (PPMCA) was employed in the analysis to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire which yielded a reliability coefficient (r) of 0.80, indicating a high level of reliability. The reliability index indicates that the instrument is stable, dependable and can be repeated over space and time. Copies of questionnaire were administered by the researcher and research assistants who communicated fluently in Izon, Epie and Ogbia languages to explain the purpose of the study to the respondents under study because most of the respondents spoke Izon while others spoke Epie, and Ogbia languages. Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were administered by the researcher and six research assistants. Three hundred and sixty-eight (368) copies of questionnaire which represented exactly the sample size for the study were retrieved properly filled and collated for data analyses after four months. The data gathered from the field through the questionnaire, were processed and analysed using the descriptive statistical tools of percentages for demographic variables, mean and standard

deviation were used to answer the research questions, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis (PPMCA) was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha to determine the influence of community development committees' engagement of citizens on the socioeconomic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

Table 1: Selection of Respondents from 118 Communities of the Four Local Government Areas

S/N	L.G.A.	CDC	YOUTH LEADERS	COMMUNITY	SAMPLE SIZE
1	Nembe	11	15	49	75
2	Sagbama	21	19	31	71
3	Southern Ijaw	28	27	52	107
4	Yenagoa	33	30	52	115
	TOTAL	93	91	184	368

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Sex		Occupation						Highest Educational Qualification				Category of Respondents		
	M	F	Student	Civil Servant	Business	Artisan	Farming	Retiree	Non-Formal	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	CDC	Youth	Community Leader

N u m b e r	2 4 7	1 2 1	4 1	7 0	4 4	2 9	1 2 1	6 3	1 8 4	6 3	99	2 2	9 6	8 8	184
%	6 7	3 3	1 1	1 9	1 2	8	3 3	1 7	5 0	1 7	27	6	2 6	2 4	50

*M = Male, F = Female, CDC = Community Development Committee, % = Percentage.

Responses from participants' demographic variables revealed that out of a total number of 368, the male population recorded a total of 247 (67%) while the female were 121 (33%). Occupationally, the respondents into farming recorded the highest, 121 (33%), followed by civil servants with 70 (19%), retirees, students and those into business recorded 63 (17%), 41 (11%) and 44 (12%) respectively. Artisans in the four local government areas recorded the least number with 29 (8%). The high number of those into farming is so because farming is the major occupation of these areas. Most of the civil servants are either non-skilled workers or those with low educational qualifications. Those into business operate small or medium-scaled businesses.

The respondents with no formal education were the highest with 184 (50%), making up half of the total number of respondents. The above figure is not surprising because these rural areas are educationally backward in terms of formal education. Those with primary, secondary, and tertiary education were 63 (17%), 99 (27%) and 22 (6%) respectively.

The category of respondents that were the highest are the community leaders, numbering 184 (50%), almost half of the total number of participants. The officials of the community development committees and youth groups were 96 (26%) and 88 (24%) respectively.

Presentation and Analyses of Responses to Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the influence of community development committees' engagement of citizens on social development in rural communities in Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Mean Analysis on the Influence of CDCs' Engagement of Citizens on Social Development in Rural Communities in Bayelsa State

Item	Responses					Mea n	Standar d	Remar k
	S A	A	D	S D	Tot al			

							Deviation	
CDCs' engagement of citizens brings about provision of social and job assistance.	127	240	1	0	368	3.3424	.48086	Agree
CDCs' engagement of citizens builds a caring and cohesive community .	173	192	3	0	368	3.4620	.51534	Agree
CDCs' engagement of citizens encourages bonding or togetherness of community members.	204	138	26	0	368	3.4837	.62618	Agree
CDCs' engagement of citizens encourages corporate and community partnerships.	82	285	1	0	368	3.2201	.42140	Agree

CDCs' engagement of citizens brings all actors of development together to ensure a stronger and more strategic focus on local and community development.	243	122	3	0	368	3.6522	.49377	Agree
CDCs' engagement of citizens encourages meaningful discussions and suggestions in planning, delivery and evaluation of projects and programmes.	149	211	8	0	368	3.3832	.52970	Agree
CDCs' engagement of citizens encourages mobilisation of community members and informs them on	134	234	0	0	368	3.3641	.48184	Agree

better decision-making on local politics, voting and elections in general.								
CDCs' engagement of citizens encourages mobilisation of community members in sharing perspectives and opinions that are unknown to the government to shape policy development.	138	229	1	0	368	3.3723	.48967	Agree
CDCs' engagement of citizens helps in the resolution of internal conflicts in the community such as boundary lines, communal work	179	188	1	0	368	3.4837	.50583	Agree
	205	153	10	0	368	3.5299	.55162	Agree

quotas and lands.								
CDCs' engagemen t of citizens enhances mutual learning among members of the community								
AVERAG E MEAN					3.429 4	5.0962	Agree	

Cut-off mean = 2.50, N = 368

Table 3 shows the mean of responses with regards to research question 1 which is on the influence of community development committees' engagement of citizens on social development in rural communities in Bayelsa State within four selected Local Government Areas. Respondents agreed with all ten (10) items on this section with respective mean scores of 3.34, 3.46, 3.48, 3.22, 3.65, 3.38, 3.36, 3.37, 3.48 and 3.53. With an average mean of 3.43, surpassing the cut-off mean of 2.50, the results indicate that community development committees' engagement of citizens has influence on the social development of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of community development committees' engagement of citizens on economic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State?

Table 4: Mean Analysis on the Influence of CDCs' Engagement of Citizens on Economic Development in Rural Communities in Bayelsa State

Item	Responses						Sta nda rd De	Re ma rk
	S A	A	D	S D	T o t	M e a n		

	a				l				viat	ion
CDCs’ engagement of citizens enhances the promotion of skills acquisition among women and youth in the community.	4 6	3 2 2	0	0	3 6 8	3. 1 2 5 0	.33 117	Ag ree		
CDCs’ engagement of citizens helps in the promotion of financial prudence among women, youth, opinion leaders and community heads.	9 1	2 7 7	0	0	3 6 8	3. 2 4 7 3	.43 202	Ag ree		
CDCs’ engagement of citizens promotes financial self-reliance among community members.	1 0 5	2 6 3	0	0	3 6 8	3. 2 8 5 3	.45 218	Ag ree		
CDCs’ engagement of citizens helps in discovering or unveiling inert abilities in community members.	2 2 0	1 4 4	4	0	3 6 8	3. 5 8 7 0	.51 468	Ag ree		
CDCs’ engagement of citizens encourages community members to be resourceful and useful to themselves and the community.	1 0 6	2 6 2	0	0	3 6 8	3. 2 8 8 0	.45 347	Ag ree		
CDCs’ engagement of citizens encourages the development of small and medium scaled businesses in the community.	1 4 7	2 1 8	3	0	3 6 8	3. 3 9 1 3	.50 516	Ag ree		
CDCs’ engagement of citizens helps in promoting	3 5	3 0 1	2	0	3 6 8	3. 1 7	.39 137	Ag ree		

indigenisation of community products and services.						1 2			
CDCs’ engagement of citizens helps in boosting financial confidence of community members.	2 5 6	1 0 2	1 0	0	3 6 8	3. 6 6 8 5	.52 604	Ag ree	
CDCs’ engagement of citizens encourages organisation of skills acquisition programmes for women and youth in the community to boost the economy of the community.	1 9 4	1 6 6	8	0	3 6 8	3. 5 0 5 4	.54 245	Ag ree	
CDCs’ engagement of citizens ensures a convenient rate of business levies and taxes for community members to encourage economic activities in the community.	1 7 7	1 9 1	0	0	3 6 8	3. 4 8 1 0	.50 032	Ag ree	
AVERAGE MEAN						3. 3 7 5 0	4.6 489	Ag ree	

Cut-off mean = 2.50, N = 368

Table 4 shows the mean of responses with regards to research question 2 which is on the influences of community development committees' engagement of citizens on economic development in rural communities in Bayelsa State within four selected Local Government Areas. Respondents agreed with all ten (10) items on this section with respective mean scores of 3.13, 3.25, 3.29, 3.59, 3.29, 3.39, 3.17, 3.67, 3.51 and 3.48. With an average mean of 3.38, surpassing the cut-off mean of 2.50, the results indicate that community development committees' engagement of citizens has influence on the economic empowerment of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and social development of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between CDCs' Engagement of Citizens and Social Development

Variables		CDC Engagement	Social Development
CDC Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.694**
			.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	368	368
	N		
Social Development	Pearson Correlation	.694**	1
		.001	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	368	368
	N		

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 shows the relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and social development of rural communities in Bayelsa State. The table shows that there is a high positive correlation between community development committees' engagement of citizens and social development ($r = .69$, $p = .001$ i. e., $p < .05$). Since the p-value, .001 (sig. 2-tailed) is less than the alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and social development of rural communities in Bayelsa State is rejected. The researcher therefore concludes that there is a strong significant relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and social development in rural communities in Bayelsa State. The result implies that CDCs' engagement of citizens leads to social development of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and economic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis on the Relationship between CDCs' Engagement of Citizens and Economic Development

Variables		CDC Engagement	Economic Development
CDC Engagement	Pearson	1	.457**
	Correlation		.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	368	368
	N		
Economic Development	Pearson	.457**	1
	Correlation	.001	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	368	368
	N		

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 shows the relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and economic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State. The table shows that there is a moderate significant correlation between community development committees' engagement of citizens and economic development ($r = .46$, $p = .001$ i. e., $p < .05$). Since the p-value, .001 (sig. 2-tailed) is less than the alpha level of .05, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and economic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State is rejected. The researcher therefore concludes that there is a moderate significant relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and economic development in rural communities in Bayelsa State. The result implies that CDCs' engagement of citizens leads to economic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings showed that community development committees' engagement of citizens had positive effects on the socioeconomic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State. This in line with Okafor in Yerikema (2025) stated that citizens' engagement teaches communities how to resolve conflict and allows for different perspectives to be heard. In this way, learning is promoted, and people will be able to help themselves. She went further by saying that communities will be able to assess their own situations, organise themselves as a powerful group and work creatively towards changing society and building up a new world. This increase

in capacity of individuals allows communities to mobilise and help themselves to minimise dependence on Bayelsa State and lead to a bottom-up approach.

In addition to the above, Okafor in Yerikema (2025) reiterated that citizens' engagement contributes to the development of appropriate policy, legislation, and regulations while at the same time promoting democracy in Bayelsa State. She further said that when people engage, it assists them in identifying key issues of concern that need to be considered. Due to a diversity of opinions and perspectives from different role players, citizens' engagement helps to obtain a balanced perspective of key issues and to identify creative solutions to problems like, for example, the partnership-in-planning approach.

Likewise, Egenti in Yerikema (2025) stated that citizens' engagement will help speed up the process of social change among rural people. To many scholars, development through CDCs is premised on the idea that every community member would want to engage because the kinship and lineage relationship within a community evoke a spirit of togetherness as well as that of homogeneity and harmony. For others, engagement with community development committees for the purpose of development has implications for equity, representation, and voice, and is thus a realisation of the long-awaited paradigm shift in social development thinking: from direct empowerment of the people to engagement of the people in decision-making toward their empowerment.

On the economic development of rural communities, Okafor in Yerikema (2025) stated that the elimination of rural poverty and the improvement of the living standard of the rural people require their engagement in those organised efforts. In essence, the collective efforts of citizens of rural communities spearheaded by the community development committees can bring about positive economic growth in communities in Bayelsa State. Similarly, Brown and Wocha (2017) revealed that citizens' engagement has been identified as effective driver of rural development in emerging economies like Nigeria and Bayelsa State in particular, while community development committees (CDCs) are key players in implementing rural development programmes in communities in Bayelsa State. Arugu and Anam in Yerikema (2025) is of the view that promoting citizens' engagement is a means of enhancing development process. They cited the Brundtland Commission which enlists effective citizens' engagement as one of the preconditions to sustainable development. Also, the Human Development Report

echoed the imperative of people engaging in their own development, remarking that people's engagement is becoming the central issue in the face of current challenges for development. Engagement and rural development have been identified as key concepts in development with the emphasis on the direct involvement of ordinary people in local affairs.

Lastly, Yerikema (2025) expressed that the formation of community development committees has brought many changes in rural areas in Bayelsa State. To achieve socioeconomic development requires an appropriate strategy of development; and citizens' engagement is such a strategy. Citizens' engagement in development takes place through community development committees. The committees facilitate the development of the human potential of members. The committees constitute the avenue for the target citizens' engagement in development efforts, which is a means of ensuring sustainability in development. Rural communities in Bayelsa State can only achieve socioeconomic development if all the community development committees in all the communities in Bayelsa State engage their citizens actively.

Conclusion

It has shown from the research findings that the engagement of citizens by community development committees has positive impact on the socioeconomic development of rural communities in Bayelsa State. The non-inclusion of citizens of communities by their respective community development committees is the cause of underdevelopment of rural communities in Bayelsa State.

The study therefore concludes that from the four local government areas understudied (Nembe, Sagbama, South Ijaw and Yenagoa), there is a positive relationship between community development committees' engagement of citizens and the socioeconomic development of rural communities, and that citizens' engagement is the most vital ingredient and the fulcrum of socioeconomic development. Rural communities in Bayelsa State can only achieve socioeconomic development if all the community development committees in all the communities of the understudied local government areas of Bayelsa State engage their citizens actively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

4. There should be proper enlightenment programmes on the need to establish community development committees (CDCs) in all rural areas in Bayelsa State that would promote and achieve effective citizens' engagement in development projects and planning. The community development committees (CDCs) should be an integral part of any rural development programme because of their closeness to people and the criteria for their appointment, selection and/or election in most communities.
5. There is need to build a well-furnished meeting point that can accommodate members of the community development committee and members of the community, and renovation of these meeting points perennially. This is a motivating factor that can make members of the community active in the development of the community.
6. The community development committees should assist the needy, bond the people, and connect the community together. By so doing, members of the community that are financially buoyant, resourceful, and technically skillful will be motivated to be actively engaged in the development of their communities.
7. Another motivating factor that will encourage members of communities to be actively engaged in the development of their communities is for the community development committees to be more friendly, compassionate, and understanding with members of their respective communities.
8. Lastly, leadership transparency of the community development committees will motivate community members to work actively with the community development committees to bring positive development to their communities.

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