

## **Multilevel Participation and Dynamics of Community Project Initiative in Nigeria: A Study of Fourth-Tier Development and Governance in Anambra State, 2016-2021.**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper explores “Multilevel Participation and Dynamics of Community Project Initiative in Nigeria: A Study in Fourth-Tier Development and Governance, in Anambra State 2016-2021.” Community development, devolution of power and decentralization of decision-making and governance have become crucial worldwide due to the rise in government activities, population growth, and development needs. No doubt in Nigeria, the three tiered system of government has become inadequate due to population and increased government activities. The top-down development model preferred by the government in Nigeria have rather aided disjointed and total absence of development in rural communities. This gives rise for the need to study bottom-up development model that suit the African history of small autonomous nationalities to galvanized development. This paper, therefore, explore the roles(s) of various government, and nongovernment actors in the development governance of projects, and to what extant their involvement has impacted the success of local initiatives in Anambra state. The study is primarily a qualitative one and adopts explanatory research design. Data was generated from secondary sources. The secondary data was complemented with key informant interview (KII) while the secondary data were sourced from books, government publications and other relevant document. The bulk of data generated was analyzed through textual method of data analysis. Using the Public Choice theory, the study argues that the Project though a bottom-top developmental model could not achieve much community development due to combination of factors. These includes but not limited to lack of law to recognize communities as a tier or arm of government that should spelt out functions of the PGs and traditional leaders of the communities. The result further shows that the people were not substantially involved in the decision-making at the grass-root and that there were pervasive corruption and looting of common wealth by staketakers (stakeholders) of the communities and party members among others.*

**Key words:** Community, Multilevel Participation and Project Initiative

### **Introduction**

The extent of people's engagement and contribution to the advancement of the economy and politics of their community in order to enhance their quality of life and living conditions is revealed through community participation dynamics. Collaborative actions of community leaders, stakeholders, governments, and citizens are required for community development through multilevel participation. Multilevel Participation in Community Development shows the level of various tiers of government, donor agencies, stakeholders and the people's involvement in the conceptualization and implementation of government policies and projects initiatives in local areas. Anambra State has been battling with complex issues of deteriorating infrastructure, poverty, and lack of progress. Previous state administrations tried different approaches to tackle these challenges without much success in improving the living conditions of the people at the grassroots level. The State is still grappling with various developmental challenges, including high levels of poverty and unfulfilled aspirations for better living standards among its people. The state is also beset by environmental concerns such as soil erosion

and flooding. There is a significant shortfall in social amenities, with infrastructure facilities such as access roads to rural areas and hinterlands, reliable water supply, provision of basic education for children and youths, healthcare services, among others.

In 2020, the Civil Rights Council (CRC), a civil society organization, conducted a poverty research in 12 out of Anambra State's 21 local government areas. The study found that poverty is most widespread among people, particularly farmers, in Anambra East and West, Ayamelum, Awka North, Ogbaru, and Oyi LGAs. It was also reported that inadequate access roads, electricity, water supply, and agricultural inputs were the primary reasons for this situation. The study also revealed that 36% of Anambra's residents have no access to power. Moreover, 86% of the population rely on rivers and ponds for domestic water, respectively, particularly in Anambra West and Anambra East, Ayamelum, and Awka North LGAs (CRC, 2020). This is despite the fact that the state recorded increase in revenue generation and collection during the period under review.

In 2014, under the leadership of Chief Willie Mmaduaburochukwu Obiano, a comprehensive economic development plan was created with a clear vision and mission statement. The plan aimed to make Anambra state a top investment destination and a centre for industrial and commercial activities. Additionally, the plan aimed to create a stable and friendly environment that would encourage both locals and foreigners to explore opportunities for wealth creation (Anambra State Budget, 2019). The government argued that with the increase in the revenue collection the state will set out some fund for community project initiatives. In 2020 fiscal year, Anambra State budget stood at one hundred and thirty-seven billion, one hundred and thirty-five million, seven hundred and forty-three thousand, four hundred and thirty-nine Naira (₦137,135,743,439) which was later reduced to one hundred and fourteen billion, nine hundred and seventy-one million, two hundred and sixty-one thousand, two hundred and twenty-one Naira (₦114,971,261,221) due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Anambra State Budget, 2021). An analysis of the economic performance of Anambra State between 2017 and 2019 indicates that the state demonstrated a steady increase in economic activity, including revenue generation and statutory allocations. According to SBS (2020) and Anambra State Budget (2021), in 2017, the state generated ₦4.0 trillion, which rose to ₦4.2 trillion in 2018 and ₦4.4 trillion in 2019. However, this economic growth did not translate into improved living standards for the people, as poverty levels continued to increase during the same period.

Due to these challenges of infrastructural deficit faced by Anambra State and desire to develop a new model of development paradigm that recognised the communities as tier of government, Governor Willie Obiano implemented a governance approach that prioritizes community participation and development. This approach recognizes the communities as the fourth tier of government and focuses on engaging both the government and the community in a multilevel partnership to empower the 179 communities in the state. One of the initiatives introduced by the government is the "Community Choose Your ₦20 Million Project Initiative," which began in 2016 and was implemented in two phases, which was completed in 2021 (Eze, 2021). The active promotion of the project and the debate it generated in the state has prompted the researcher to examine its effectiveness in meeting the set out objectives and its impacts on the lives and living condition of the people of the state. This examination will serve as a basis for investigating the level of community involvement in the project.

### **Multilevel Participation in Community Developmental Project Initiative**

Usman, Antwi-Boasiako, and Arogundade, (2018) averred that numerous factors can affect the degree of community involvement in a development project initiative. The community members' awareness and comprehension of the project and its objectives, the extent to which they believe their opinions and concerns are acknowledged and considered, the level of transparency and accountability in the project planning and execution process, and the accessibility of resources and support to facilitate community participation are some of the primary determinants of community engagement in development projects.

This can only take place where the community are involved in the project initiatives, in Nigeria, communities are not always involved into decision making. So the position of the authors is not the situation in Nigeria. In Nigeria, while the people in rural community desire to participate in project initiative, the elected government officially believed they know all that the people in rural community needs, hence they package project for the communities.

Without adequate community participation, achieving community development is unattainable. Usman (2018) contend that participation serves as both a means and an end, where locals collaborate with community planners and developers to realize satisfactory and successful results, or where initiatives are executed more efficiently. Ahmed (2011) posits that participation is a way to accomplish development by allowing society members to directly engage in the development process. Participation in community development has a substantial impact. Development literature increasingly emphasizes the importance of ensuring the involvement and active contribution of society members in the design of community development projects or programs for long-term sustainability and autonomy. Education is necessary for sharing the responsibility of development benefits. Ignorance of the best use of human resources in the development process is a battle lost before it starts.

Usman et al. (2018) assert that eradicating rural poverty and enhancing rural living standards require participation in organized efforts. Popular participation has emerged as a central concept in voluntary development, around which current development endeavours revolve. Empowerment is the objective of any community volunteer effort in a community development program. Participation is typically included only at the implementation and maintenance stages when used to accomplish development projects. Usman et al. (2018) describe participation as cooperative efforts to increase and exercise control over resources and institutions by previously excluded groups and movements. This definition carries economic, social, political, and cultural implications. Consequently, the authors argue that participation can contribute to the basic needs strategy by defining basic needs, augmenting resource generation to meet basic needs, enhancing the distribution of goods and services, and fulfilling people's psychological desire to partake in decisions affecting their lives. The problem of this submission is that, in Nigeria, local community are not always consulted in the community project. Usman et al. (2018), who employed a survey method in their study titled Public Administration: Local Government and Decentralization, found that projects would not receive rural community support unless the rural community participates. They also concluded that community participation in development initiatives leads to the following outcomes:

(i) Self-sufficiency: This broad term covers a wide array of benefits that participation can offer. Participation helps to dismantle the dependency mind-set prevalent in underdeveloped areas and instead fosters self-awareness and confidence, prompting individuals to assess their issues and contemplate positive solutions.

(ii) Efficiency: Participation enhances the probability that resources allocated to development projects will be utilized more effectively. For instance, participation can help minimize misunderstandings or potential disputes, reducing the time and effort often expended by professional staff in explaining project advantages to people.

(iii) Effectiveness: Participation makes projects more effective because development projects' instruments are invariably external mechanisms that are supposed to benefit the people of a specific area. Participation that gives the community a voice in determining objectives, assisting with project administration, and making their local knowledge, skills, and resources available must result in more effective projects. Many projects have failed to achieve their goals in the past because the local community was not involved. Effectiveness equals the achievement of goals, and participation can help to ensure this.

(iv) Coverage: The majority of government programs and numerous organizations that guide or support development projects tend to reach a limited and often privileged group of individuals. In many

developing countries, service delivery only extends to a small portion of the population. Participation can expand the coverage, connecting more people directly with development activities and potentially increasing the widespread appeal of such services.

Robert (2019) posits that community participation invokes a strong sense of local community empowerment in development projects, leading to capacity building and enabling the community to manage such projects more effectively and efficiently. His research employed a survey design with secondary data sources and concluded that community participation was previously categorized as active, passive, or interactive. Active participation is promoted, with community members actively involved in all project stages, making decisions and performing crucial tasks such as project management, monitoring, and evaluation. Conversely, during passive participation, the community remains distant and does not intervene in activities; they are informed about what will happen or what has already occurred. Robert (2019) states further that interactive participation takes place when individuals engage in joint analysis and planning processes, and target community members enhance their existing structures while assuming control of their development process. In Anambra state and Nigeria, passive participation is the situation before 2014. From 1999 till 2014, government identified projects in rural communities, provide funding and technical implementation for such project initiatives. Government never allowed the community to select project for sponsorship. There is need for community involvement not only to improve participants' knowledge and skills but also fosters a sense of fulfilment in meeting needs, enabling people to more easily achieve their objectives. It also serves as a method for determining value, priority, and collective action. Individuals can reach their full potential by being aware of their environment and possessing the ability to access, process, and apply new information. Donor agencies participation is also necessary to ensure community development a success in both people and community progress.

Participation is considered a sound principle for sustainable development, in practice, in third countries like Nigeria it is often diminished to a consultation mechanism or a routine exercise to satisfy donor requirements without effecting the desired change or challenging the dominant power structure and status quo in a given community. The issue with these three participation levels—active, passive, and interactive—is that, throughout Nigerian political history, the government has consistently assumed it knows all the people's needs and, as a result, has not involved them in decision-making and project implementation for rural areas. Over time, the government has relied on a top-down approach, packaging people's needs and delivering them without their input or participation.

### **Impact of Community Project Initiative in the Improvement of the Living Condition of the People.**

Lyn (2022) submits that the community choice project aims to enhance local people's involvement in decision-making processes that impact their lives, fostering better communication and collaboration between local institutions and community members. The project consists of two stages: the first involves the formation of a community select committee to identify important community needs and develop an action plan, while the second stage focuses on implementing the plan and assessing its effectiveness. Lyn (2022) suggests that this project has the potential to improve the lives of community members by facilitating communication, collaboration, and increasing their participation in decision-making processes. In Anambra state, there has never being any local involvement in the community project initiatives, Lyn submission of the two stages was peculiar to Imo state.

In the context of community development, the extent of community participation plays a crucial role. When communities are engaged in development initiatives, their level of involvement in the process tends to be higher. Nibyza's project and management theories, as explained by Richardson (2018), provide a theoretical foundation for effective project management. These theories propose that involving beneficiaries or communities in project design, implementation, and management contributes to their success and long-term sustainability.

However, community participation in government development programs and project ownership remains low in many African countries, including Nigeria. Although African constitutions emphasize the importance of involving people in government projects to ensure accountability and service delivery, these principles are often not followed during project implementation. The focus of most African countries' constitutions and reforms lies in decentralizing economic activities rather than fiscal decentralization. As a result, the central governments, controlled by the Ministry of Finance, retain financial control over districts, even though government funds are typically provided as conditional grants, following the government's directives. This situation resembles the colonial period when citizens were excluded from participating in economic activities (Soludo, 2021).

According to Olukotun (2017), projects with community participation have generally been rated as satisfactory. In Anambra state, the community-choose-your-project initiative was introduced during Governor Willie Obiano's administration, which transformed communities and town unions into fourth-tier governments. This approach adopted a bottom-up development strategy, where communities had the opportunity to select projects to be executed by the state government.

Initially, there was little or no association between the fourth-tier governance concept and the classical modern regime form of "federalism." The concept of federalism, attributed to the Fathers of the American Constitution of 1787 and the authors of the Federalist Papers of 1788 (Hamilton, 1788), drew its major components and characteristics from the political ideas presented by the French philosopher Montesquieu in his book *The Spirit of Laws*, published in 1748. In constitutional terms, Montesquieu defined "federalism" as a form of government where sovereignty is divided into two distinct but equal spheres of authority, national and regional. The sovereign legislator and policymaker within each sphere holds the government and principal authority, which is recognized by other actors and arbiters of authority in that polity. The main objective and justification for adopting this system of governance was to prevent excessive concentration of power in a single level or unit of government, ensuring the preservation of individual freedoms and safeguarding against authoritarianism and oppressive government rule.

#### **Anambra State Community-Choose-Your-Project Initiative: An Alternative Development Strategy.**

According to reports from a 1962 international social work conference in Rio de Janeiro, community development is defined as "a deliberate effort to help communities identify their needs and take increasing responsibility for solving their problems, thereby enhancing their ability to fully participate in national life". United Nations (2014) adopts a similar definition of community development as "the process by which community members and government authorities work together to improve communities' economic, social and cultural conditions, integrate communities into national life, and enable them to fully contribute to national progress."

These definitions identify two key elements of community development: firstly, community members' participation in initiatives to improve their living standards through self-help and government assistance, and secondly, complementary support from government and external organizations to make community efforts more effective. In summary, community development requires the willing and full participation of communities as well as support from government and other outside groups.

The Anambra state community-choose-your-project initiative was a development model introduced by Governor Willie Obiano in 2016. This bottom-up approach sought to change the top-down nature of most government development policies. It aligned with Obiano's vision to make Anambra the top investment destination and hub for industry and commerce, and a socially stable, business-friendly place that would attract both locals and foreigners. To achieve this, Obiano developed an economic plan that gave 179 communities twenty (20) million Naira each to identify and execute a project addressing a key need. The goal was for communities to use local resources to complete projects,

keeping funds circulating locally and empowering residents. According to the government, this program, running from 2016 to 2021, improved living conditions and empowered locals. This work examines whether the program decentralized power, ensured multilevel governance, and brought development closer to the people, as the government claimed.

According to Eze (2020), the Anambra state model of Bottom-Up development paradigm is a unique approach to governance that deviates from the Western model that assumes elected representatives know what is best for the grassroots level. The Community Choose-your-Project initiative, which allows each community in the state to select a development project to be executed by the state government with a sum not exceeding N20m, is a fitting model for countries seeking a new approach to governance. The state government provides specifications and ensures compliance with standards and contractual terms, while each community decides what is best for them and supplies the labour for the project.

Eze (2021) notes that the Community-Choose-your-Project initiative in Anambra State seeks to bring equity to governance by ensuring that every community in the state has a government presence or symbol of affection on an equal basis. This approach gives every community a sense of belonging and importance to the government. The initiative also allows each community to decide what development project is best for them, avoiding arbitrary imposition of white elephant projects by presumptuous governments. This freedom of choice is democratically liberating and should be a manifestation of democracy's finest form.

Governor Obiano's approach to governance breaks away from the archetypal leaders who determine what is best for everyone. His Bottom-Up development paradigm is a fitting model for countries seeking a new approach to governance that deviates from the Western model that assumes elected representatives know what is best for the grassroots level. The initiative creatively redefines the traditional approach to community development efforts, which previously failed to empower local decision-making and allow direct control of development resources by local community groups. Governments have traditionally packaged and delivered development projects and services to communities as passive recipients and beneficiaries of development assistance, without engaging local community people in decision-making processes, project planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This lack of community engagement and participation implies that such projects do not reflect community priorities, needs, and wishes, and are seen as belonging to the government (Eze, 2021).

### **Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

**Theoretical Framework;** This work is guided by the public choice theory. The public choice theory, which is a bottom-up approach, is utilized to determine the extent of people's involvement in the community-choose-your-project initiative as well as evaluate the effect of the project on the living standards of the state's inhabitants. The public choice theory, applies economic principles to the study of political science and government decision-making. The theory was first proposed by Thomas Hobbes in 1651 and asserts that people are naturally self-interested and rational. They will thus choose to submit to the authority of a sovereign government to live in a stable civil society, which is more likely to allow them to fulfil their interests. Public choice theory also posits that decision-making in democratic governments is motivated by "selfish benevolence" on the part of elected representatives or government employees. This means that elected and appointed public servants are motivated more by self-interest than by a moral desire to maximize the welfare of society.

The study anchors on this theory because governments will always try to implement policies that may fail to support the interests of the masses. Key issues in public choice theory include the role of money in politics, the problem of collective action, and the role of political institutions in shaping individual behaviour. Another essential argument of public choice theory is the problem of collective

action. This refers to the difficulty of getting a group of individuals to act in their collective best interest, even when it is in their individual best interest to do so. This problem is often seen in the context of public goods, where the benefits of providing a good or service are shared by everyone, but the costs are borne by only those who contribute. As a result, it can be difficult to get individuals to contribute to the provision of public goods, leading to a suboptimal allocation of resources.

Public choice theory also examines the role of political institutions in shaping individual behaviour. By understanding the incentives and constraints created by political institutions, public choice theorists aim to better understand how individuals make political decisions. This theory therefore emphasised the need for joint action in community project initiative for rural development. Its cardinal thrust is to participatory effort in political decision making for development. The theory therefore suits the extant work and help to bring clearly the multiply participation of government and community in joint effort of community development.

There are several limitations to public choice theory, including the assumption that individuals act primarily in their self-interest, which may not always be the case. Additionally, public choice theory often assumes that individuals have perfect information and can make rational decisions based on that information, which is not always accurate in the real world. Furthermore, public choice theory often assumes that individuals are free to make their own decisions without any external constraints, whereas factors outside of individuals' control, such as the political institutions they live under or the media they consume, can also influence their political behaviour.

While public choice theory offers valuable insights into political decision-making and community participation, it is not without its limitations. The study uses this theory to explain why individuals may be reluctant to participate in community development initiatives, even when it is in their self-interest to do so. Secondly, public choice theory can aid in comprehending how political institutions impact people's involvement in community development projects. Political institutions, such as interest groups and political parties, can significantly influence how individuals participate in the political process, including their engagement in community development initiatives. Public choice theorists can gain a better understanding of how individuals make political decisions, including their decision to participate in community development initiatives, by recognizing the incentives and limitations created by political institutions.

**Methodology** Explanatory research design was used to explore literature in the investigation of the research problem. Documentary method of data collection aided with key informant interview was utilized to generate data from secondary sources for this study. A textual analysis rooted on systematic logical induction was used to test the hypotheses.

### **Impact of the N20 Million Project on the Socioeconomic Development of the People**

Governor Willie Mmaduaburochukwu Obiano's community-choose-your-project initiative, which involved ₦20,000,000 that was given to each of the 179 communities in Anambra State, has concluded after running from 2016 to 2021. This initiative was praised for being a significant departure from traditional development approaches in third-world countries. The bottom-up development strategy, which was implemented in all 179 communities in the state, has been recognized as a new model for community and rural infrastructure development. The impacts of these projects on the living conditions of the people and the socioeconomic development of the communities are now being evaluated under the following subheadings:

**Road Infrastructure:** It is widely known that the majority of roads throughout the State are currently in a deplorable and deteriorated condition due to substandard construction and insufficient maintenance. It is also unfortunate that the construction of State roads was often entrusted to seemingly unqualified contractors who exploited the lack of proper oversight by the State Ministry of Works and Housing to deliver subpar work. The state roads under Gov Willie Obiano appear to be the worst since

the beginning of the current democratic era in 1999. Obiano neglected rural and community link roads in favour of legacy projects that do not immediately improve the lives of rural residents, as these projects primarily benefit the wealthy and upper class, not the poor and low-income individuals. The state capital and surrounding areas have become a source of immense hardship and stress for motorists and community road users due to poor road conditions. As a result, the project initiative failed to enhance community road connections among communities (Akabogu, 2021).

**Health Facilities and Life Expectancy:** It is a well-known fact that health is wealth! The state of primary, secondary, and tertiary health facilities in the state is highly unsatisfactory. State general hospitals have essentially become glorified health centres. Dispensary units or consultancy services are staffed by demoralized, underpaid doctors, and the facilities are not accessible to the poor due to high costs. These unmotivated personnel often establish private clinics and hospitals where they provide adequate medical care to citizens who can afford the high fees, while the poor are left to suffer. Consequently, medical doctors and staff in State hospitals rarely report for duty, as they focus more on their private clinics where they treat patients for substantial fees. This unfortunate situation forces desperate politicians to seek urgent medical care from private hospitals, where they pay exorbitant bills for treatment. This has led to a boom in private hospitals across the State at the expense of ill-equipped and understaffed State hospitals. The resulting consequences include frequent loss of lives for those unable to access treatment from State hospitals or afford the high fees charged by private hospitals (Akabogu, 2021 and Amali, 2022).

Health as a crucial aspect of a nation's development, is intertwined with socio-economic progress. The state of a society's health facilities and institutions reflects its commitment to development. Health encompasses complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing, meaning that a nation cannot truly prosper unless its citizens enjoy good health. Anambra State has 598 public health centres, 1699 private health centres, 3030 female medical workers and 509 male health workers. At the end of Obiano administration, the state was contending with critical issues such as inadequate facilities and manpower, poor funding abysmal health information management and weak standards regulation in primary, secondary, tertiary and digital healthcare systems (Aburime, 2022).

These factors make it challenging for Anambra to achieve significant improvements in the healthcare sector. Indeed, Governor Obiano's eight-year tenure was marked by poor health ethics and insufficient funding. A key indicator of the decline in healthcare quality over the years, particularly during the period under review, is the fact that state dignitaries and other privileged individuals, including high-profile business people, continue to seek medical treatment abroad for various ailments, ranging from common to complex. The Nigeria Medical Association has reported that the country loses over N600 billion annually to what it terms 'medical tourism' (Good morning Nigeria, 2021).

**Education Sector:** The education sector in the State is currently in a state of disrepair, lacking in infrastructure and qualified teachers in public schools. A survey conducted in selected communities in the state revealed that many public schools lack qualified and adequate teachers, particularly in Awka North, Ayamelum, Anambra East and West local government areas. For example, in Ukwala and Inoma Communities, pupils sit on the floor to read and write, while in Awba-Ofemili community of Awka north, there is only one teacher for three subjects and two teachers for three classes, among other facility shortages. The welfare of teachers and staff in public schools is also a concern, as their monthly salary is insufficient. Education is crucial for the advancement of any modern society, and it is imperative that the government provides adequate attention and support to prevent the collapse of the education sector in the State.

Today, Anambra state has, 1191 private primary schools, 1057 public primary schools, 277 private secondary schools, 256 public secondary schools, 4 private tertiary institutions and 3 public tertiary institutions (Aburime, 2022). At the time Obiano Administration ended, 22 percent of the 2,781 primary and secondary schools were classified substandard in a 2020 UNESCO report. Also, a 2021 report by the



National Journal of Educational Leadership (NJOEL) highlighted a 22.24 percent dropout rate in secondary schools as a result of factors such as teenage pregnancy, poverty and insecurity across the education regions. With the foregoing unflattering statistics, it evidences that N20 million community choose your project initiative did not achieve much in education sector (Aburime, 2022).

**Job Creation and Employment Generation:** The quality of life and economic prosperity of a nation is linked to its citizens' ability to find and participate in meaningful economic activities for self-sustenance. Many government policies focus on sectors that can provide employment opportunities for the country's youth. Therefore, job creation is a primary objective of any responsible government, which is why effective policies aimed at generating employment are essential.

Table 1 PERCENTAGE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA 2015-2020

S/N	YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF UNEMPLOYMENT
1	2016	21.10%
2	2017	22.90%
3	2018	23.9%
4	2020	40.75%
5	2022	55.5%

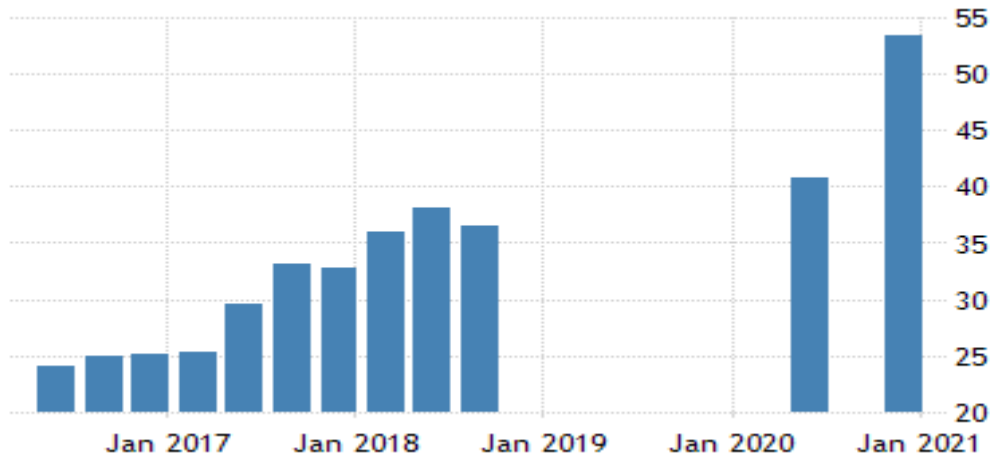
Source: NBS 2022

The table above shows the trend of unemployment rate in the country, of which Anambra State is a part. In 2016, the rate stood at 21.10%, but it increased to 22.90% and 23.9% in 2017 and 2018 respectively. In 2020, the figure rose to 40.75%, and in 2022, it reached an all-time high of 55.5%. Statistics shows that there was an unemployment rate of 13.1 percent in Anambra State as at 2020 and 1.2 million people on Anambra's Social Register, without employment and were exposed to all forms of vulnerabilities (ABS, 2021).

In an interview, with Hon. Pharm. Obinna Emeneka, the Anambra State House Committee Chairman on Finance and Appropriation, and the Anambra State head of service identified population increase and lack of economic diversification as the major challenges to employment creation in the state. They called on the private sector to support the government in creating jobs, as the government cannot employ all job seekers. The ₦20,000,0000 Community-Choose-Your-Project initiative, which was intended to provide jobs for youths in rural communities, achieved little or nothing. Therefore, wealth creation remains a herculean task, as no nation can create wealth for its citizens when the majority of the population are under perpetual unemployment.

The high unemployment rate in Anambra State has led to an increase in poverty and insecurity. The poverty situation in the state has now reached a dangerous level, with millions of Nigerians living in poverty and without any hope of breaking out of what is now a violent cycle of poverty. This situation requires urgent attention from both the government and the private sector to address the root causes of unemployment and poverty in the state (Akabogu, 2021 and Amali, 2022).

Fig 1: NIGERIAN YOUTHS UNEMPLOYMENT RATIO BAR CHART 2017-2021



Source NBS report 2022

The image above is a chart that shows the ratio of Nigeria youths unemployment 2017-2021. It clearly shows a consistent increase in unemployment from 2017 which was at about 33% but rose to 40% in 2018 and reached an all-time high of 55% in 2021 under the President Muhammadu Buhari administration. This has affected the unemployment situation of youths in Anambra state as an integral part of Nigeria. Anambra State's social environment is a product of Nigeria's social environment and so whatever affects Nigeria's social environment also affects the state.

**Living Condition and Poverty Level in Anambra State.** The impact of ₦20,000,0000 community-chose-your-project initiative can be assessed by looking at the level of poverty and living conditions in rural communities of Anambra State. In order for any policy to be considered successful, it must meet the needs for which it was formulated. The success of national socio-economic policies is evaluated based on how they affect the lives of people, which is measured using poverty indices. Poverty has been a problem for over 80 percent of the Nigerian population in the past eight years, and there have been no real changes in living standards, despite increases worldwide. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2021, Nigeria's poverty rate is 85 percent, and 80 percent of Nigerians live below \$1.5 per day, despite the country's increasing wealth from natural resource exploration. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) ranked Nigeria 158 out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) scale in 2019, and in 2015, Nigeria ranked 153 out of 186 countries. Poverty in Nigeria is both a rural and urban issue, as most development projects are either abandoned or never implemented, leaving many rural and urban areas devastated with no access roads and little or no basic amenities. According to World Bank President Jim Yong in 2015, Nigeria is one of the top five countries with the largest number of poor people, ranking third in the world, while India and China ranked first and second, respectively. Seven percent of the world's poor people lived in Nigeria in 2015, according to the same report. The living conditions of people in Anambra and Nigeria, in general, have worsened from 2015 to 2021.

Table 2 THE NIGERIAN UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION, DEBT TO GDP AND EXCHANGE RATE UPTO 2015

Year	Unemployment	Inflation rate	Debt to GDP	Exchange rate
2007	14.60	5.40	11.70	125.80
2008	19.40	11.60	11.80	118.50
2009	21.40	12.50	15.40	148.90
2010	21.40	13.70	15.40	149.70

2011	23.90	10.90	17.50	153.90
2012	N/A	12.20	19.40	157.50
2015	33	15	24.50	158.50

Source: UNDP-NG-MDGS Report 2015

Addressing poverty necessitates understanding the primary locations where the largest population of impoverished individuals reside and formulating a targeted policy to tackle poverty in those areas. It also involves focusing on regions where hardship is particularly widespread. Given that the majority of Nigerians live in rural and community areas that heavily rely on the informal sector, the concentration of economic activities in urban areas has contributed to another form of poverty caused by the duality in the national economy. The persistent decrease in opportunities for those without means and the continual rise in the poverty rate, despite economic growth, clearly indicate that the Anambra State ₦20,000,000 Community-Choose-Your-Project initiative, aimed at reducing poverty, has not fully achieved its goals (Akabogu, 2021).

**Security of Life and Property:** Security is the foundation of any society, influencing its social, political, economic, and cultural growth. Neglecting this crucial aspect of development often leads to various social issues, including violent crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killings, child trafficking, and other criminal activities. Upon assuming office as Governor of Anambra State in 2014, Gov. Willie Obiano warned criminals and kidnappers that they would face a tough fight (Obiano, 2014). However, by the end of his tenure, insecurity in the state had worsened, making Anambra one of the most unsafe places in Nigeria.

Security lapses are so evident that incidents of kidnapping, killings, and robbery occur daily across the state, along with youth-related crimes due to high unemployment and cultism. The murders of Dr. Chidi Akunyili, husband of the late former Minister of Communication and NAFDAC, and Okey De Okey, a State House of Assembly member representing the state Governor, were high-profile cases during this period. Gov. Willie Obiano's inability to guarantee state security has resulted in the abduction and killing of Anambra citizens and others throughout the state, with kidnappings in the State occurring frequently.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The central problem of the work is that over the years' various government at all level believed that they know all the problems of the rural community, hence packaged development model that is anchored on top-down model for community development. This of cause did not take into consideration the African inherent history of small nationalities and autonomous communities before the coming of the white colonisers. The issues of population that require alternative development strategy as a result of expansion in the activities of government explain why there is need to study a new model of development anchored on bottom-top model. These problems ensured the development of three hypotheses that has been tested. It revealed that though the bottom-to approach allow the community to choose their projects for government financing, however government guide lines that youths and women wing should be involved in decision of the project were not adequately followed.

The standards set by the government were not followed by both the government themselves and the communities as corruption and mismanagement of the fund were seen in the part of the state government officials and the community stakeholders. The community and town union are not fourth tier government due largely because there was no enactment of legislation to recognise it as such, this pave way for power struggling between the PGs and the Traditional Rulers on who have executive

power to administer the community. Though the project brought about infrastructural development in the state but the living condition of the people did not appreciate during the period.

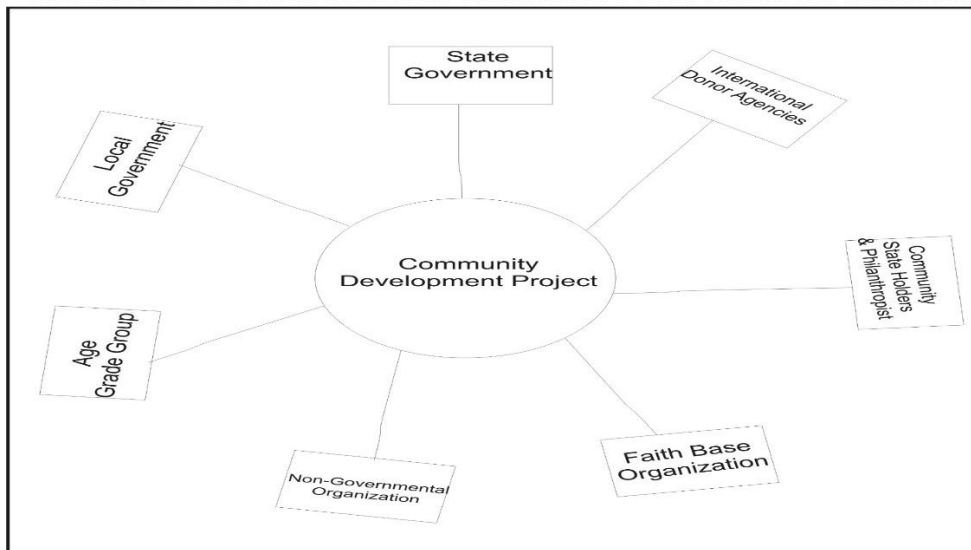
This work offers the following recommendations to enhance the socio-economic development and living conditions of the people of Anambra State and the country as a whole: (a) There is an urgent need for power devolution, decentralization, and recognition of communities for development in Nigeria, particularly in Anambra state. This is the essence of multilevel participation in governance as a model for community development. Therefore, the Anambra Model of bottom-up development strategy is recommended throughout Nigeria to accelerate rural and community development. (b) Consequently, the Anambra State government should pass legislation recognizing town and community as a fourth tier of government in the state for comprehensive development. The current situation is insufficient to achieve the desired outcome. A law is needed to define the functions and powers of traditional rulers and Presidents-general concerning the governance of towns and communities in the state. (c) Anambra state's socio-economic development and inherent strengths include a stable political atmosphere and national security. Development in rural areas largely depends on the government's approach. Since the majority of Nigerians live in rural areas, government development policies and strategies should target these populations. Rural development programmes should be designed and structured as the core of a continuous dynamic process of national development rather than an ancillary component. Socio-economic development cannot be discussed without addressing the transformation of rural economies and lives to improve the living standards of rural populations. (d) Corruption and mismanagement must be addressed head-on, with stolen funds recovered and reinvested into critical socio-economic sectors to alleviate people's suffering. (e) All government policies and development strategies should prioritize the welfare of the people. The paradox of growth without development should be addressed by diversifying the nation's economy for equitable distribution of common wealth. Policies aimed at reducing inequality in the system should be pursued to decrease socio-economic discontent in society.

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#### **MULTILEVEL PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**



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