

The Role of Community Development Association in Ensuring Environmental Justice: A Case Study Of Obajana Community, Kogi State.

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ABSTRACT

The realization that a region or neighborhood is not merely a collection of structures but also a "community" of people with unrealized potential for self-improvement was one of the key contributions of community development. In today's human setting, the role of community development association cannot be overemphasized. Inequalities in economy and power are addressed through the process of community development, which is focused on inclusion, civil dignity, social justice, equity, and equality. This study assesses the characteristics of the Community Development Association (CDA) members in the Obajana area of Kogi state, Nigeria using descriptive research design which describe the characteristics of their members without influencing the results. Personal characteristics, such as the age of members, sex, educational level, of the community development association members and projects executed by the community development association of the community were also investigated. It was gathered that most of the self-help projects were funded from the contribution of the members, via; money, labor, and material resources. Little help from the cement plant and grants. The CDA was also able to get social amenities for the community via the Obajana Cement Plant.

Keywords: Community Development Association, Obajana, Environmental development, Self-help projects.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The environment of man has been subjected to many degraded conditions owing to the various activities of man in his bid to effectively harness the potentialities that bound in their natural setting. In this process, that cultural, physical and socioeconomic environment becomes the major sufferer of these activities.

Community Development can be said to be as old as any society we see today, and an old societal activity. People have organized themselves into organizations at various points in history and used communal resources to produce physical improvement and useful services in their locations even before the start of the colonial administration. For instance, communal labor was used to build dwellings, clear fields, build roads and even construct some public utility structures like markets and king's palaces. Community development is defined by the United Nations as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. '(1).

A community is a collection of individuals who engage and help one another, and who are connected by similar experiences or traits, a sense of belonging, and frequently by geographic proximity. The values of empowerment, human rights, inclusivity, social justice, self-determination, and collective action serve as the foundation for community development as a whole (1). The concept of community has altered and evolved since the time of ancient Greek philosophy along with changes in social relationships and behavior. The community, according to Aristotle, is a collection of elements with shared purposes and objectives (2). Community development involves changing the relationships between local and uncivilized people and the elite, rich, in positions of power. This enables them to participate in the discussion of community issues that affect their lives. Community participation involves sharing knowledge and experience which is shared to create solutions into communal and cooperative action to achieve desired goals. Community change-makers work with communities. Also, in most communities, in recent times, development associations have distinct powers that can influence the spatial organization and types of development that occur in their jurisdiction, Hence, in the past decade, many of these localities have chosen to use their authority over local land use, planning, zoning, and public health and welfare to address environmental climate justice against pollution.

Community development Associations are typically formed when several people who share a geographical area decide to band together and collaborate on projects to improve their surroundings and make it safer and simpler for everyone to live there. These associations are not gender or academic level based, it does not matter the social standing of an intending member, and it only depends on the right attitude towards the community and the environment and willingness to do the right thing for the benefit of the community (3).

Community development organizations are typically non-profit and volunteer organizations. The organization of CDAs differs depending on several variables, such as the extent of their operations, the kinds of activities they conduct, and their financing source(s). In general, CDAs are not required to answer to the people they serve or provide for. CDAs work to improve their local communities. The goals of its representatives and the association's access to resources determine what shape this takes and how it manifests(3).

The approach to social action in which members of a community coordinate themselves for planning action, creating both collective and individual plans to satisfy their needs and address their issues is known as the use of CDAs for development. They carry out these plans with the greatest possible reliance on local resources, and when necessary, they supplement those resources with aid from the government [3]. The CDAs' method of self-help, on the other hand, entails the utmost involvement of all the members in the decision-making process. Participating in CDA activities is a way for locals to get involved in a project that needs a democratic approach. All members are thought to contribute to decisions that have an impact on them. Because they are more inclined to associate with its use and see it as their project, people are more likely to be devoted to a rural project if they are involved in its development and implementation; it has been noted [4].

According to Wilson (1997:170), he defined community relations as a product of the need for industrial sector to address the problems of the community around which it operates. This community relation is a policy or practice of the industrial organizations in which aspects of the needs of people having common rights, leading to common life and living in the same locality are attended to serve as a mark of goodwill to the communities in which they are located.

This study is centered on Obajana, which is a town in Kogi State, located in the Oworo district of Lokoja LGA, and houses the biggest/largest cement plant in Africa, the Dangote Cement Plant. Due to the different human actions undertaken to fully utilize the potentialities inherent in their natural environment, the environment of humanity has undergone numerous conditions of degradation. The cultural, physical, and socioeconomic environment suffers the most as a result of these activities in this process, and in turn, the humans inhabiting these environments (5). Any country's main objective is undoubtedly development. Because the industry is expected to produce commodities, services, and tangible comforts to raise living standards, development associations are necessary to do so.

An unfavourable government policy over the years towards the cement companies and the manufacturing sector at large has been disappointing. Policies such as the privatisation of previously government controlled cement companies which led to their collapse due to underfunding, government's ban and subsequent lifting on importation of cement and the imposition of multiple taxes on producers have all had negative implications on industry growth prospects (NSE, 2015). The individual in that sector fails to recognize the consequences of industrial pollution on the health of inhabitants and their socio-economic activities. The problems are undoubtedly greatest in the developing world, where traditional sources of pollution such as industrial emissions, poor sanitation, inadequate waste management, contaminated water supplies and exposures to indoor air pollution from biomass fuels affect large numbers of people (6).

Hence, the need for the Obajana Community Development Association to play its role in ensuring environmental justice in their immediate and surrounding environment.

The Importance of Community Participation.

The rationale behind the increasing role of public participation is captured aptly in the following words:

With the growing environmental protection. States have taken on the duty of addressing risks and dangers that could endanger a large number of people, if not the broader population. The open space, the water, and the air are now regarded as shared resources owned by everyone, and their reasonable administration serves the interests of everyone, not just one particular person. As a result, states are increasingly realizing that traditional structures of individual participation and judicial protection of the individual in environmental law are insufficient and that the general public, interested citizens, and organizations should be given the chance to participate in the administrative decision-making process. The public should have the opportunity to form and express an opinion and voice it during the environmental decision-making process when environmental protection measures are taken with the public's interest in mind and when the public is expected to accept and comply with those measures.

In order for citizens to effectively exercise their rights, access to information is crucial in a democracy. The public interest suggests that access to information on the effects of industrial activities, permits all relevant factors to be taken into account as part of the decision-making process, so expanding access to environmental information is essential as it allows for competing interests to be balanced. The dissemination of environmental

knowledge thus clearly contributes to the attainment of the objective of sustainable development. Environmental information can have an impact on how both businesses and ordinary citizens behave and make decisions. Expanding the availability of knowledge may be the crucial trigger for altering behavior or boosting performance. Information can assist us in understanding how our current actions will affect the legacy we leave for future generations. Better environmental policy decisions and stronger environmental law enforcement procedures are two other advantages of enhancing the environmental information system. Additionally, more comprehensive information helps educate communities about the environmental hazards that they and their residents face. Many environmental laws contain no provisions at all addressing public disclosure of information, and in the absence of public disclosure, the role of communities in matters of environmental decisions affecting them remains unnecessary. Let's take the Water Act section that says prior consent(8) is required for the discharge of sewage or industrial effluents as an example. Publication of a consent application or simply notice for an application are not provisions. As a result, a community might not even be aware that a nearby river's waters may contain industrial trash. The following statement is appropriate given the process's secrecy:

Brife Histroy of Obajana Community InKogi State

It is located along Lokoja - Kabba - Ilorin Road, Lokoja Local Government Area of Kogi State. It is about 200 kilometers from Abuja and about 45 kilometers from Kabba. It is about 35 kilometers from Lokoja. Its traditional leadership lies with the Oba (Engr.) (Dr.) IdowuIsenibi JP. The Bajana III of Obajana kingdom. The ethnic group of this community comprises of heterogenous tribes. Obajana is one of the fastest growing rural communities in Nigeria following the commissioning of the Dangote Cement plant in the community. The growing profile of the cement company has lead to the sprawling of new buildings reflective of a modern community. Vehicular movement between Lokoja and Obajana has greatly increased in recent time due to the advent of the cement industry. Obajana indigenes live mostly around the Oba's palace and a settlement around Ejinwonstreet. The residential areas are located few meters away from the cement industry on a land originally belonging to Oyo-Iwa community.

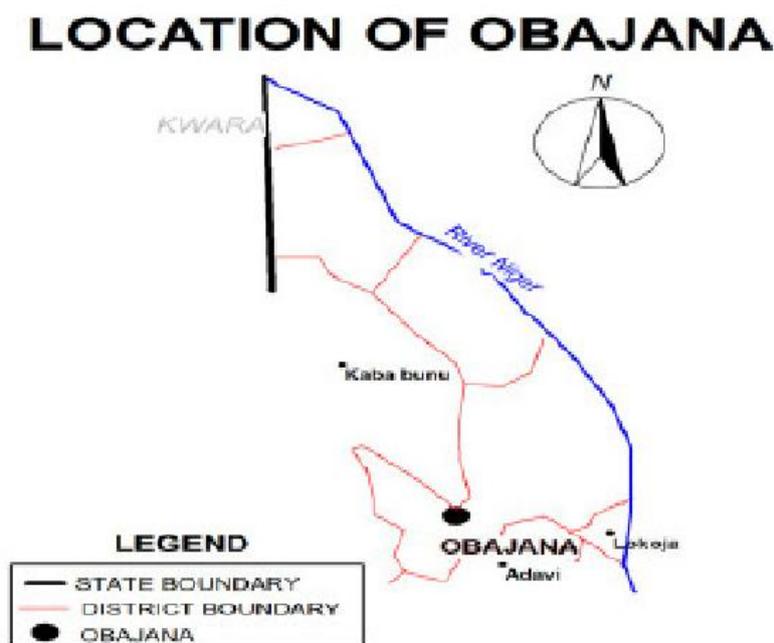


Figure 1: Location of study area (7)

Brief History of Obajana Cement Plant

Obajana Cement is a subsidiary of Dangote Industries, which was founded in 2002 with focus on the production of bagged cement.

This huge factory can be found in the Oworo district in the Lokoja local government area of Kogi state, Nigeria. The mountainous Oworo district extends into various cities to the north by the IgbiraIgu (Egbura), the northwest by Kakanda, the west by the Abinu, and to the south by the Ebiraland. Obajana is a town in Oworo land. (6)

Incorporated in 1992 and starting operations in 2012, this plant relies on Gas, Coal, and LPFO for power, (6), and this plant is supported by a fleet of 2,370 trucks (as of the time of this study). This plant depends on limestone and additives sourced from the Obajanamines. Obajana's rapid development was accelerated by the 2003 establishment of the Obajana Cement Company, which either intentionally or unintentionally encouraged growth or advancement at key locations in the area. However, the region still has some issues, such as a rapid population growth that is not accompanied by an equivalent increase in facilities, utilities, or services, which creates planning issues of various sizes.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the impact of Community Development Association in Obajana.
- To examine the climate justice performance and environmental compliance of companies situated in Obajana.
- To examine the level of Community social responsibility of Companies situated in the community
- To recommend appropriately.

Survey Design

A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Descriptive research design is a **scientific method that involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way**. The population of the study comprised 100 inhabitants and workers of the Obajana Cement Plant, Obajana, Kogi State of Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled "The Role of Community Development Association in Ensuring Environmental Justice-A case study of Obajana" which contains items to get data on activities of the Community Development Association; these data are Gender, Marital status, Age of respondent, employment status, educational status, are you a member of your community development association.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean, frequency distribution, percentage, and standard deviation.

Presentation of Result

Question 1: Gender

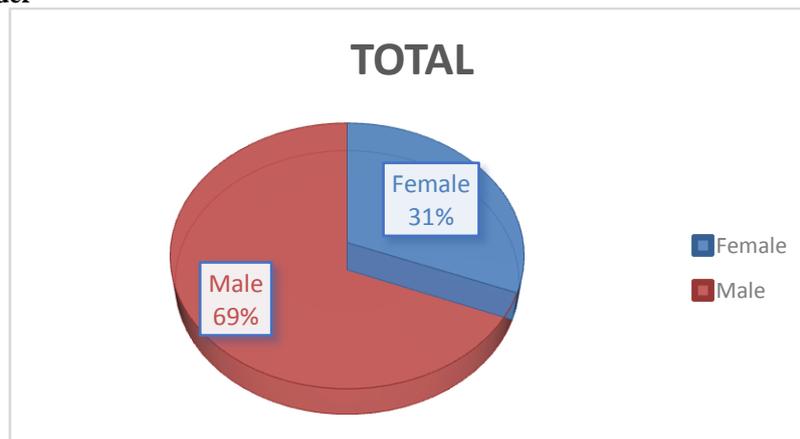


Figure 2: Gender percentage of respondents

The percentage of Male to females is 69% to 31%, this shows an active community, where the women are also included in decision-making for the community and show the female folks are not left out of the association as well.

Question 2: Marital Status

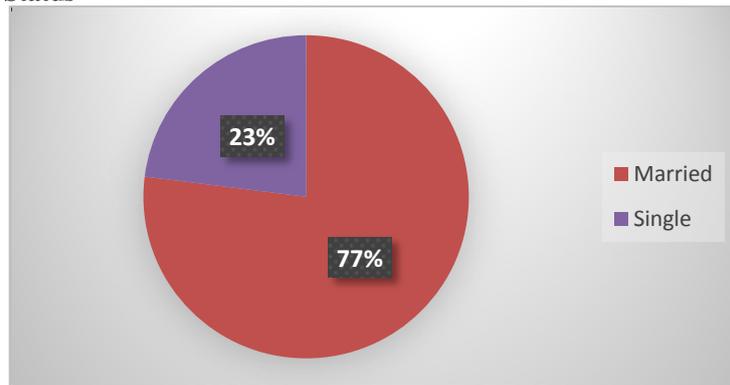


Figure 3: Marital status of respondents

A larger percentage of respondents are married, with few being single. This shows a higher level of responsibility on the respondents, not just on the home front but also in the immediate environment.

Question 3: Age of Respondents

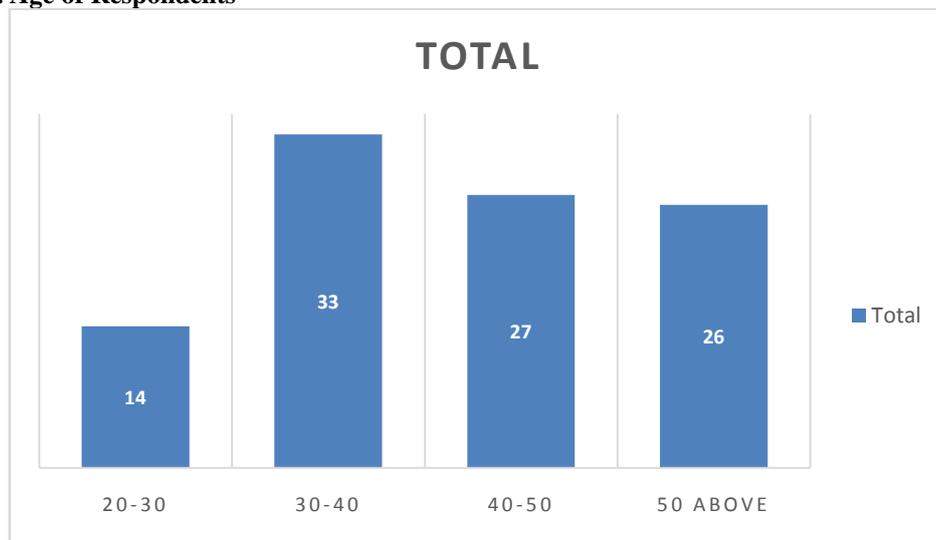


Figure 4: Respondents' ages in percentages

This chart shows that majority of the respondents and residents of Obajana are adults and thus can make reasonable decisions for the community at large. With 33% of the respondents being 30-40 years, 40-50 years having 27%, and above 50 years of age having 26%, and the lowest of which is 20-30 years of 14%.

Question 4: Employment Status



Figure 5: Bar chart showing the employment status of respondents

From the plot it could be observed that 65% of respondents are gainfully employed, with 18% being self-employed, retired is 6% of the respondents, students, the unemployed, and freelance account for the remaining percentage of the respondents.

Question 5: Educational Status



Figure 6: Showing percentage of respondent's educational qualification.

Those with a B.Sc. certificate accounted for 35% of the total respondents, 34% of those with M.Sc., and 21% and 10% respectively for those with secondary and first school leaving certificates.

Question 6: Are you a member of your community development association? And does your CDA carry out self-help projects?

Response to question 6 is explained in Figure 6

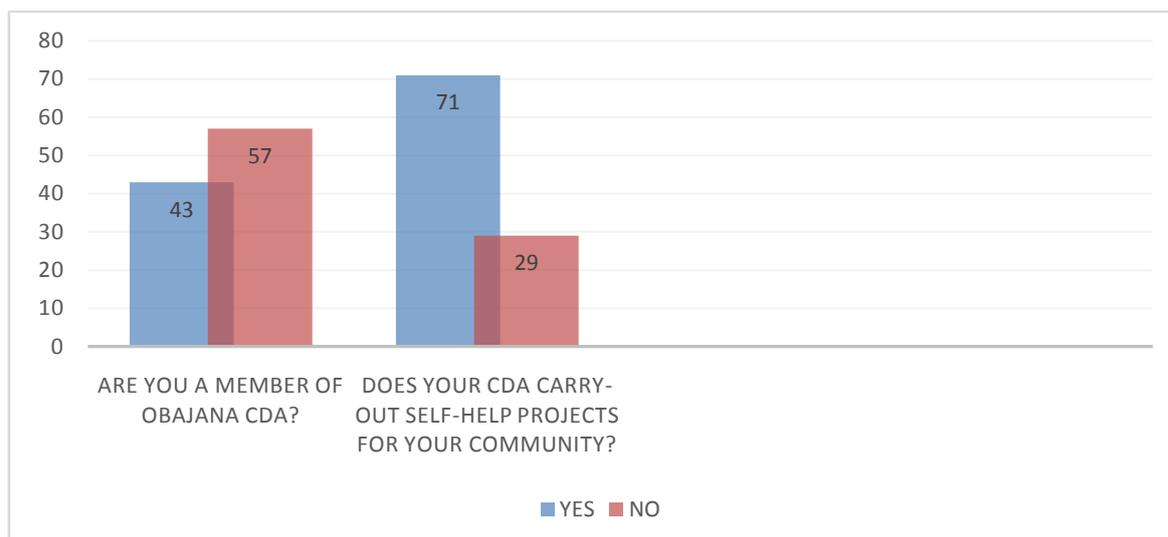


Figure 7: Response of respondents to question 6.

A good percentage of the respondents belong to their community development association while few do not belong to it. 71% of the respondents agree to their CDA carrying out self-help projects for the community while few responses came in as NOT AWARE.

Roles of Obajana Community Development Association (CDA)

From this study, it was gathered that both genders were represented, though the male folks were more than the female, this shows a level of commitment to the well-being of the community, the ages of the respondents are an indication that all age groups are involved in the association, again, marital status does not matter in this association as long as the rules are respected and the common goal is achieved. It was gathered from this study, that most members of the CDA are land owners and landlords/landladies, and as a rule, one needs to care for his or her environment for sustainability sake. The fight between the Obajana CDA and the administration of the Obajana Cement Plant is an indication of the strength of this CDA. All raw materials needed for the production of cement were and are still being mined from the lands of the inhabitants, this does not only leave them with little land for agricultural purposes but all cause degradation as the mine sites cannot be returned to their original state after mining, this causes danger of open pit, run-off water (contaminating their water supply), land and air pollution from the release of gas into the atmosphere from the production process.

With the advent of the cement plant, the Obajana Community Development Association issued a communique to the management of the Obajana Cement Plant to provide basic amenities for the inhabitants; these include good roads (dualization of Lokoja-Obajana-Kabba road), Pipe-borne water, Electricity, hospitals and houses (6).

The Community Development Association has been able to ensure that the lands were returned to their natural state by reclamation, they make agitation for the development of their lands, these include the building of houses for the inhabitants, health care facilities, provision of pipe - borne water, good roads that were destroyed by fleet of trucks and the massive employment of their youths in the plant.

The Community Development Association in Obajana has succeeded in achieving several self - help projects, notable among the projects are provision of security for their community, building of a large multi - purpose hall which is rented out for events, health care center among others.

Obajana community development association source of funding for self-help projects

The members of the Obajana CDA, explicitly explained with figures, how they manage their self-help projects, this ranges from the member's contribution of funds to participate in the projects, both from the construction stage to the maintenance of said projects as shown in the Tables below

Table 1: Project Funds Contribution by CDA members

FUNDS CONTRIBUTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
#500-1000	47	47.0
#1000-1500	35	35.0
#1500-2000	18	18.0
TOTAL	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 2: Projects contribution by CDA members

FORMS OF CONTRIBUTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Contributed money, time, labor, and material	36	36.0
Contributed only money	26	26.0
Contributed material resources.	18	18.0
Contributed Labor only	16	16.0
Contributed nothing	4	4.0
TOTAL	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 3: Funds Assistance to CDA.

TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	FIRST PROJECT		SECOND PROJECT	
	FREQ.	%	FREQ.	%
NO ASISTANCE	80	80.0	43	43.0
LOANS	-	-	-	-
GRANTS	18	18.0	26	26.0
GIFTS	2	2.0	1	1.0
NO RESPONSE	-	-	30	30.0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 4: Suggestions of Respondents on how best to improve the development and welfare of the community

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION EFFORTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Should the factory be relocated due to it negative effect on the community	5	5
Should the factory be enforce to increase it developmental effort in the community	36	36
Should stiff environmental laws be enforce	45	45
I don't want to say any thing	14	14
Total	100	100

Cement manufacturing causes environmental impacts in which ever stage and method applied. These include emissions of airborne pollution such as dust, greenhouse gases, noise and vibration when operating machinery and through blasting in quarries..

Table 5: Development efforts of Obajana Cement Companyto ameliorate the community ` challenges

Developmental efforts	Frequency	Percentages
Providing electricity	10	10
Migrate to new area	45	45
Complain to health authorities	14	14
Protest	18	18
Others, Specify	13	13
Total	100	100

It was identified that major projects were carried out by the CDA. After knowing the self-help projects carried out, the study picked two major projects from the list of projects accomplished by the CDA. For self-help projects (Table 2), 36% of the population had contributed their money, time, and labor to the project, another 26% had contributed only money, 18% contributed their material resources, and 16% contributed labor, while 4% did not contribute anything.

Table 3 explains the source of funds for the projects, 80% of the members said no assistance from external sources, no loan was collected for the projects, 18% of the members agreed to get grants and gifts said the remaining 2%, (for the 1st project), which was for the building of market stalls for market people. The 2nd project records as follows 43% no assistance, while funds from grants accounted for 26% of the members, 1% from gifts while a whopping 30% did not respond to this question. But generally, the CDA members usually make monthly or quarterly monetary contributions to the coffers of the association for maintenance purposes and projects, as depicted in Table 1. This information shows that a total of 96% of the members had participated in one way or another in the completion of the projects, which means a high success rate for the projects.

Some of the Benefits of Community Participation

Before one enumerates the several benefits of community participation it is important for one to know the different modes of community participation. On a very general level public participation consists of attempts to influence law, policies, and individual decisions made by the government or regulatory bodies. This involves

many various things but it includes being able to have access to, idea, evaluate, formulate and comment upon proposals, strategies and programs. Thus public participation can take the form of: (8)

- Diverse participation where representative bodies such as NGOs or industry associations speak on behalf of individuals.
- Interested party participation where proposals which have already been formulated are transmitted to interested parties to comment upon and refine.
- Premeditated participation which consists of ‘agreeing the ground rules’, i.e. including the public in determining what general policies and strategies should be adopted before moving to the stage of specific proposals.

In addition participation can have diverse grades of legal force. For instance, in environmental impact assessment, public participation is essential pre requirement which is pre condition of the grant of planning permission. One of the central challenges of public participation is seeking to ensure that the quality of the participation is sufficient to actively engage the public and that proper opportunity is given to respond to any consultation exercise (8)

○ Improving the quality of decision.

The role public participation has to play in improving environmental decisions is very essential. One of the roles is the improvement of access and public participation in decision-making enhanced the quality and implementation of decisions... ‘This can be done through the input of specific expertise held by members of the public through the elicitation of social and cultural values.

○ Environmental problem solving.

- Deliberation procedures, which call for all parties involved, including governmental and community officials, to sit down and discuss all sides of an issue in an effort to come to a consensus on it, are one way that clashing ideals can be reconciled.

○ Promoting environmental citizenship.

The idea that people should have some responsibility for their own interactions with the environment is the basis for environmental citizenship. Participation in environmental issues is essential in fostering this kind of citizenship. Environmental citizenship is primarily promoted through including the public in the formulation of environmental policies and by increasing knowledge of environmental problems.

○ Improving procedural legitimacy.

The public will see the decision-making process as more legitimate if there is greater public participation in it, access to high-quality environmental information, and ex post review mechanisms like judicial review.

Thus one can clearly make out how important the role of communities is, in making decisions regarding their environment and the impact of policies on their sustenance. It was this action that necessitated the government to take note of the environmental issues raised by the community and resulted in the government taking policy decisions keeping in mind the suggestions of the local community. These instances where the communities have spoken for themselves and achieved results go to show how important their roles really are.

II. Conclusion and Recommendation

From this study, it is shown that a community has the sole purpose of providing for itself, the ability to fight and promote your environment and community lies within the power of the community. Always having to wait for the government to come to the aid of the people in a community is a long dream that might never happen. A community moves forward or remains backward by default. Based on these findings, CDAs should work closely with the community development personnel in their community for directing their problems and request to both the local and state governments. These two levels of government, especially the local government, which is meant to be based on the grassroots, should identify these CDAs, improve the efficiency of their activities, and provide appropriate guidance, coordination, motivation, surveillance, and evaluation of their projects through qualified government personnel. This is because Non-Governmental Organizations of which CDAs are good examples had been demonstrated to be very valuable both to the government and the community in augmenting government efforts in rural areas.

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