

Article

Persisting poverty, unemployment/underemployment in Cross River State, Nigeria: The urgency of improving good governance and participation in the state economic empowerment and development strategy

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Accepted 5 January, 2009

Civil society contribution to social and economic development has been acknowledged and documented in the literature. Ruefully, despite the disappointing results of development planning concentrated at the national federal level and imposed from the federal capitals of Nigeria from the gaining of political independence in 1960 to the 1990s and the decision at the dawning of the 21st Century that the rather “top down” approach towards development management was doomed to failure and deserved replacement. That compelled the initiation of the economic empowerment and development strategizing by Nigeria’s National Planning Commission as a better and more effective approach that should be adopted by all levels and entities that manage development activities (governments at the federal, 36 states, 774 local government areas and thousands of communities). Appropriate methods (case study and so forth) were used to analyse the operation of the CRSEEDS processes in the Cross River State since 2005 to the present. The findings are presented as follows. The government and its agencies or representatives have been reluctant to adopt participatory development management strategy involving engagement of (and partnership with) multiple stakeholders (civil society, faith organizations and private businesses) as recommended by development philosophers and practitioners including UN Agencies, conventions among others. While the State Planning Commission took about 17 months to develop the zero draft of the CRSEEDS-2, it gave civil society about seven days to make inputs into the plan. Additionally, it ignored previously submitted papers suggesting policy thrusts, targets and strategies submitted by a civil society network whose members had researched, analysed and reviewed the CRSEEDS-1 and provided information for improving CRSEEDS-2. The Cross River State government’s ignorance, downplaying and misunderstanding of the distinctive contributions, experience and potential of civil society in the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (CR-SEEDS-1 and the ongoing CR-SEEDS-2) has been compromising the output and outcome of development management in the state. Consequently, the CRSEEDS processes have been devoid of innovations in the application of environmentally (and climate) -friendly technologies and approaches (especially sustainable-renewable and efficient-energy and environmental governance) being advocated by the global development community. This obtains in the state despite the existence of civil society networking actively with reputable global organizations in various aspects of sustainable development. The implication of this exclusion of stakeholders for development policy is that the reversal of the habit of exclusion of civil society and stakeholders from the development process towards their inclusion in a good governance framework or process is urgent and imperative for optimizing the mobilization of human and natural resources from the region’s vast but poor grassroots communities under the participatory development management strategy that has led to the achievement of revolutionary changes in Brazil and surrounding countries.

Key words: Economic empowerment, development strategy, participation, stakeholders, state.

INTRODUCTION

Economic empowerment and development strategy in Cross River State: A brief history

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) is a new development planning approach that was initiated by the National Planning Commission in 2004. This new approach seems to have replaced the old National Development Plans, with four of them (first, second, third and fourth) prepared and implemented between the 1960s and the 1980s. At the inauguration, the first version of NEEDS covered 2004 to 2007 and was designed to respond to existing problems and had the objectives of reducing poverty, unemployment and to promote economic growth and value re-orientation (National Planning Commission 2004). The National Planning Commission invited other entities that are responsible for and provide suitable spatial frameworks for organizing development activities to follow its example by creating sub-national regional development plans. Therefore, some of Nigeria's 36 states, 774 local government areas and thousands of communities have produced their own versions of the plan. Those for the states are called State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS); those for the local areas are called: Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS); while those for the communities are called: Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (CEEDS). Consequently, Cross River State created its first plan in this initiative in 2005 by the customized name and acronym: Cross River State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (CR-SEEDS). It was to cover the years 2005 to 2007.

Between 10th to 23rd December 2008, the State Planning Commission presented copies of the zero-draft of the CR-SEEDS-2 (printed and near ready-to-be-published) covering 2009 - 2012 to the public including all the senatorial districts in the state and shared copies to an exclusive club of supporters of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) claiming that they were "development experts". Copies were also shared to mostly functionaries of the Cross River State government and the elite (drawn as usual from the bureaucracy, the ever present military class and private sector operators). As was the case with the CR-SEEDS-1 (that covered 2005 - 2007), the competence, experience, and potential of civil society has been ignored, downplayed and misunderstood.

The problem: Consistent and various forms of exclusion of the "publics" from government-prepared plans

This comes as a very rude shock at a time that Cross River State, Nigeria and the world are confronted with crises of all forms and shapes: ranging from energy shortages, over-reliance of polluting geological energy

sources (fossil fuels and nuclear power), excruciating and debilitating poverty, resource wars and perhaps the parochialism of the status quo beneficiaries. The latter refers to the outgoing Presidency of George W. Bush in the USA-which presided on and brought to the world's greatest economy and democracy a battery of collapses: financial and the prestige of the white American male power brokers among others. The exclusion of civil society from the CR-SEEDS processes thus far can easily be attributed to executive ignorance of the State Planning Commission about the distinctive contributions of civil society to the restructuring of global society. Other significant dimensions of the exclusion are: the lack of a regular platform in the State Planning Commission for engaging with stakeholders in the development process and the poor governance of funding for paying the cost of participation of competent civil society in the CRSEEDS process.

OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this article is to contribute towards raising the achievement of the Cross River State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy processes, institutions, structures and attitudes. The specific objectives are:

- To highlight the distinctive endorsement and contribution of the new paradigm of development management that involves multiple stakeholders (civil society, private sector and government) in participatory partnership aimed at achieving development objectives around the world.
- To show the weakness in the implementation of good governance (creation and application of appropriate structures, institutions, processes, attitudes for managing the CR-SEEDS).
- To recommend how the full potentialities of civil society could be harnessed and optimized for raising the management of the CR-SEEDS-2 and subsequent processes.

STUDY AREA

Originally created in 1967, Cross River State covers an area of 21,787 square kilometers (Nigeria 2006) located at the "south eastern" extreme of the Federal Republic of Nigeria - thus its initial naming based on such location at conception and inception. The need to rapidly develop the state is urgent and imperative because the region has for too long been deprived of federally allocated financial investments for economic development based on its description, by those who ignored its tourism and other potentials, as one of Nigeria's "economically backward

regions" based on claims that it lacks natural resource endowments (minerals) and so forth (Omuta and Onokhoraye 1986). Her population in 2006 was officially reported to be over 2.9 million people (about 1.5 million or 51.7% males and 1.4 million or 48.3% females). Compared to its 1991 population of over 1.9 million (50.03 % males and 49.97% females) (Nigeria 2007 and National Population Commission, 1991), there is evidence of a rapid demographic increase. The sub-national region comprises 18 local government areas led by council chairmen and functionaries. Physically, the region is characterized by diverse climate and vegetation characteristics: the northern part features savannah woodland and forests, and a pocket of temperate-type climate at the Obudu Ranch plateau; tropical high and other forests occur at the central area, while the southern fringes present mangrove and swamp forests. The state has been plagued by several problems including poverty, low-yield peasant agriculture, HIV/AIDS, among others (State Planning Commission, 2005). Rainfall varies from as much as nine months of wet season in the southern fringes to only seven months at the northern part.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Although the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategising (NEEDS) initiative and its counterpart: the Cross River State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategising (CR-SEEDS-1 and 2), are currently in their second cycles since 2004, when they began; the academic and popular literature are yet to report assessments of the process. Without reports of rigorous assessments of the new development planning and management systems, it is difficult, if not impossible for the public and the global development community to know the extent to which Nigeria and its 36 states and federal capital territory among other entities, have been striving towards achieving their local development goals and objectives. Assessments of the prevailing development management strategies are also required for measuring the progress of the country and its sub-national regional governments towards achievement of Nigeria's Vision 20/2020 (which wishes to put Nigeria in the comity of the 20 most economically advanced nations in the world) and also the realization of the millennium development goals (United Nations 2007).

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This paper is organized in sections. The following (second) section will present a conceptual framework, which reviews the competence, experience and potentials of civil society, which have demonstrated their capability globally and how the considerable interest in the CR-SEEDS process has been ignored, downplayed and misunderstood in the CR-SEEDS process. Then various de-

velopment management approaches are presented that highlight paradigmatic shifts from "top-down" down to "bottom-up" approaches towards the pursuit of development planning and management around the world, the recommendations by the UN Agenda 21 of rights of access to information, public participation and justice as foundations for pursuing development and the emergence of the millennium development goals (MDGs) and related literature. Section three presents the methods of study, examines the way the participatory development management was ignored in the pursuit of the CR-SEEDS-1. It shows how unfortunate this attitude compromised the achievement of the CR-SEEDS-1 and has characterized the production of the Zero Draft of the CR-SEEDS-2, which was recently open for public comments as a step towards finalizing and publishing the second plan under the new approach. Section four presents, interprets and discusses the results of this study, concludes and recommends strategies of improving participatory development management in the Cross River State and Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Distinctive contribution of civil society to sustainable development

Recently, civil society has been instrumental to achievements in almost all sectors of the economies of the globe and specific nations including the G8 nations. From the banning of land mines, to debt forgiveness and the most recent shifting of energy generation and supply paradigm from geological fuels to green and sustainable energy sources, among others, civil society has been at the forefront of the contest for superior ideas and strategies or simply blazing the trail. In stating his mission as Prime Minister of Britain recently, Gordon Brown promised his country people that his government was poised to strive towards replicating the achievements of two civil society organizations: the Red Cross (in medicine and welfare of disaster afflicted people worldwide) and Sans Serif (in education). Had Prime Minister Brown expressed his mission more recently, that is after the advent of the global financial crises in September 2008, he probably would have added the Grammeen Bank of Bangladesh that is now assisting economically depressed citizens of the USA to start and manage small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) using micro-credit facilities. That is currently happening in the USA (BBC News, December 2008). Civil society has recorded these sterling achievements by virtue of its several advantages including its capacity and credentials for representing the interests of communities at the grassroots and rural areas, its flexibility and innovativeness among other qualities (UNDP, UNEP, World Bank and WRI. 2000, 2005).

New paradigms in development management

There is need to highlight the fact that new thinking or paradigm shifts have occurred in the pursuit of development. One prominent paradigm shift pertains to the increasing or the near unanimity in agreement in the community of experts that the pursuit of development using the colonial “top-down” and government-dominated models have been responsible for the woeful failures of all the development decades that started in the 1960s (the first) and ended in the last decade of the 20th Century (the 1990s and the last). This woeful failure of the government “knows-all, and do all” of development pursuit was radically transformed, at least in principle at the Millennium Summit that assembled most countries’ leaders and their representatives to create the eight millennium development goals (MDGs), which most nations are striving seriously to achieve by the deadline: 2015. As it is more than mid-time gone into the pursuit of the MDGs, there have been a legionary of reports in popular and academic literature suggesting that the Cross River State and most of Nigeria would miss achieving most of the MDGs (United Nations 2007, State Planning Commission, 2005, Ingwe 2008). One of the reasons why Cross River State finds herself in this unenviable position is the way one of the eight MDGs has been violated in the CR-SEEDS-1 and 2 processes.

Agenda 21: the recognition of the value of access to information, public participation and justice as instruments for accelerating sustainable development

The role or value of providing rights of access to information, public participation in development processes and justice- including seeking redress for wrongs done individuals and groups -were acknowledged and documented during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (www.pp10.org). These principles of sustainable development have been further re-iterated and consolidated upon after the Rio Conference including their enshrinement into the Aarhus Convention (Nakhooda et al., 2005). Therefore, they are currently being promoted and applied for the pursuit of sustainable development including poverty reduction and job creation and provision programmes around the world under the pioneering and championing of civil society (www.theaccessinitiative.org).

Variations in participatory development management

Participatory planning: Participation is being increasingly advocated as a development strategy that is more capable of resolving the problems of developing areas by the initiatives of the local people themselves contrasted to

the “top-down” ideas imposed from governments, foreign international organizations (Dey, 2008). Although, the concept of public participation was advocated for the entire spectrum of activities and components of the development process, its application by different authors and experts, sub-national regions and countries have varied rather widely. The variation in the conception and application of public participation has been determined by specific circumstances, social processes of power relations obtaining in the various spatial scales or areas. Owing to space and time constraints, only two major strategies of participatory development are briefly examined in this study: participatory planning and participatory development management. As the name suggests, participatory planning describes the type of participation that involves the invitation of stakeholders (communities that are supposed to gain from the development interventions planned and those to be affected variously from the planned actions) in the decision making process. It is not clear whether it is supposed to be applied throughout the entire development process or cycle since there are some aspects of the cycle where the involvement of other stakeholders seems to be either silent or not clearly specified (Poppe, 1992). The theoretical bases, aspects, rationale, purposes and levels of citizen participation in the development process have been profusely documented. (Duruzoechi, 2001) However, some seem to have capitalized on this uncertainty to suggest that it ends at the stage of planning and excludes the stakeholders from some of the planning process involving the selection from a wide gamut of alternative actions, goods and services that can be implemented and /or provided.

Participatory development management: The second type participatory development management involves the continued activity of the stakeholders in most of the entire development management activities including implementation of planned actions among others. This implies that the various communities especially those who have been identified with the possession of particular talents are given opportunities to participate in budgeting and financing decision making, procurement and so forth. This employment of this approach by budget constrained and unemployment afflicted sub-national regions (municipalities) has caused the emergence of impressive success stories in Brazil and most of South America (Ingwe 2008).

Distinctive contributions of partnerships to achievements in development: Another dimension of the paradigm shift described above has to do with the increasing consensus that achievement of development goals is immensely facilitated by the employment of partnerships with a multi-stakeholder characteristic and involving the traditional governments working collaboratively with civil society, private businesses and faith organizations among others. This point can easily be appreciated by

the way the Millennium Summit of 2000 incorporated partnerships for development into its eighth goal.

Millennium Development Goal-8: Develop a global partnership for development

Although most of the targets under this goal emphasize partnership among nations, and international development organizations, the targets are areas that have been (are being) championed by civil society thereby providing lessons for governments. The targets include: dealing comprehensively with developing countries' debt; develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth in cooperation with the private sector; addressing the special needs of the least developed countries (under which Nigeria must be placed because of her presentation of some of the worst development indicators in the most poverty stricken Sub-Saharan African region), landlocked countries and small island developing state; develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading system; and in cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications (United Nations, 2007).

THE NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN THE CROSS RIVER STATE

The CR-SEEDS-1 (2005 – 2007)

The methods of case study, qualitative analysis and desk research were applied to analyse the CR-SEEDS process generally including the first and second cycles (1 and 2). The emphasis was not to do a panoramic analysis of all the sectors and issues covered in the CR-SEEDS-1 and 2. Instead the emphasis was on the extent of participation and partnership between the government and other stakeholders in the process. The case study approach was used to analyse the culture sector only, albeit briefly, because it was compulsory to examine the sector as a viable means of reducing poverty. The CR-SEEDS-1 was 140 pages long and comprised 28 chapters. It consisted of sectoral policy thrusts, lofty (and frequently unrealistic) targets and incredible strategies covering all the major ministries, departments and agencies mandated to implement development programmes and projects in the state. The sectors covered include: education, science and technology; health, HIV/aids, environment, housing and urban development, agriculture and food security, industry (and manufacturing?) tourism and forestry. It also dealt with other issues including: public sector reforms, transparency, accountability and anti-corruption, budget reforms, planning process, service delivery and expenditure; due process mechanism and transparency (budget monitoring and price intelligence unit), and so forth (State Planning Commission 2005). Zero draft of the CR-SEEDS-2 (covering 2009 - 2012)

was 150 pages long and organized into 24 chapters that is, four chapters less than the first version (2005 - 2007). The vice-chairman of the State Planning Commission of the state explained that it was prepared to emphasize the State Governor (Senator Liyel Imoke's) seven-point agenda and also his "Economic Blueprint".

FINDINGS OF ANALYSIS OF THE CR-SEEDS 1

What to measure in development

Nearly 40 years ago, Sir Dudley Seers in a lecture entitled: "What are we measuring?" delivered at the Institute of Development Studies in the University of Sussex in 1969, instructed the development community that the key questions that require urgent answers when assessing development were: What is happening to absolute poverty? What is happening to unemployment? What is happening to inequality? He further explained that if all the three vices have declined considerably from their previously high levels over the period studied, the place for which development actions were planned and implemented could be described as developing. In the contrary, if the conditions regarding absolute poverty, unemployment and inequality got worse over the period assessed, it will be anomalous to speak in terms of achievement of development (Todaro and Smith, 2005). Seers' instructions and questions have remained relevant to the matter deserving comments in this study. They are also well suited for the assessment of the achievements of the CR-SEEDS-1, which was supposed to strive towards achieving the goals of reducing poverty, unemployment and promotion of economic growth and value re-orientation as stipulated by Nigeria's National Planning Commission.

Changes in poverty levels between 2005 and the present (2008)

Poverty has remained unchanged that is, did not decline significantly since the CR-SEEDS-1 in 2005. This has happened because neither the governorships of Duke nor Imoke of 1999 - 2007 and 2007 to present respectively asked the questions that became standard basic questions in development speak. Besides, these governors never heeded the advice of NEEDS-1 that states and local governments should target reduction of poverty and unemployment in their jurisdictions (National Planning Commission 2004). Moreover, another dimension of the culture of implementing development programmes without evidence (information produced by analyzing data) in Nigeria, the creation of CR-SEEDS-1 and 2 have failed to apply existing socio-economic evidence to plan. This is because government planners claim that statistics are almost always inadequate and therefore do not seriously apply them to plan and manage development in Nigeria since development planning started in the 1950s (Stolper

1966). In the case of the CR-SEEDS-2, existing evidence of gross poverty and unemployment were ignored. Some examples included findings that all the problems (serious poverty, high unemployment and under-employment, economic stagnation and decline, valuelessness) have remained at the levels they were in 2004 or worsened.

Serious unemployment, under-employment and poverty persist after the CR-SEEDS-1

Evidence of persisting poverty in Cross River State manifests in recent reliable official statistics of 2007 revealing that unemployment and under-employment in Cross River State remain at high levels. For example, the national composite unemployment rates remained unchanged between 2002 and December 2006: about 13% in 2002, 14% in 2003, 11.9% in 2004, 12.1% in 2005 and 12% as at December 2006 (NBS 2007). The total under-employed youth aged 15 years and older was 12.0% with males forming 15.2% and females constituting 9.0%. Five percent of young people aged 15 to 24 years old who were unemployed within this unfortunate 6.2% were males while 3.9% were females. Those who were unemployed within the ages of 15 years and older were 1.8% broken down into: 1.8% males and 1.7% females. (National Bureau of Statistics 2007). The same source states that Nigeria's national unemployment rates were 11.9% in 2005 and 2006 broken into 10.0 and 10.1% for urban Nigeria and 12.6 and 12.3% for rural Nigeria in 2005 and 2006 respectively. The distribution of unemployed people by age groups in 2006 were: 16 - 24 years about 53%, 20 - 44 years about 37%, 45 - 59 years about 4% 60 - 64 years about 3%, 65 - 70 years about 3%. Unemployment by gender in 2006 was: males about 52%, females about 46% and total about 89% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

Poverty in Cross River State

Owing to the fact that the National Bureau of Statistics' published report on poverty was dated at the time of writing (the agency was yet to report the most recent poverty profile), other measures of poverty presented below, reveal the seriousness and persistence of the scourge in Cross River State. A large proportion of the state's population is energy poor because a disproportionately large number (536) of households in the states in the south-south region (74.9% of households in Cross River State) resorted to using solid fuels (a description of unprocessed and health-risky wood, frequently wet and poor combustors, waste of animals and plant matter, such as cow dung, charcoal and so forth) for cooking in 2007 (Nigeria 2007). This tragic scenario turns out to be interesting because it was in the same 2007 that the Obasanjo administration, under which the current Gover-

nor (Senator Liyel Imoke) worked as a minister of power and steel, promised Nigerians reliable and stable electricity supply that could have prevented the large-scale use of dirty energy sources.

Other indicators of enormous poverty in Cross River State

In 2007, there was a high rate of child labour in the state. Children aged 5 to 14 years who worked in family businesses were 59.8% compared to only 3.2% in Bauchi State (Nigeria 2007). The findings of the Cross River State Gender and CRSEEDS Network's analysis of the achievements of the CR-SEEDS-1 plan have been reported (GADA 2008; Ingwe, 2008). As stated earlier, several reports submitted by members of the Network have elaborated the rather dismal performance of the programme over 2005 - 2007 (Ingwe, 2008). What deserves statement at this juncture is that spectacular improvements have not been recorded in the state as a result of the implementation of the CR-SEEDS-1. This explains why, unlike the profuse and elaborated reports (running into several articles each with several pages) submitted by members of the network, the zero draft of the CR-SEEDS-2 can only present a vague review of the CR-SEEDS-1 in only one page (State Planning Commission 2008).

Poor governance of development management in the CR-SEEDS process: How have development planning and management ministries, departments and agencies of Cross River State government approached the process?

The main agency responsible for development planning in the state is the State Planning Commission located in Calabar. The approach that has been applied by the commission in planning development has been very limited participatory planning. The planning approach is described as limited participation because, stakeholders are invited to make comments as members of the public after major planning actions and decisions have been taken. The evidence of this in the CR-SEEDS-2 is the printing and limited circulation of a 150 - page planning book before announcing on radio in less than a week that the public is invited to comment on the plan. Notice that there is a world of difference between applying good governance by inviting stakeholders to the "table" to make inputs into a plan that is "commenting" on a plan and actually contributing to decisions that gets incorporated into the plan (that is, the document). An invitation to comment does not necessarily connote a promise to reverse decisions already printed in the CR-SEEDS-2. Frequently, the response to such public comments has been: "Well, you are entitled to your opinion".

The structural and institutional weakness in the State Planning Commission is the lack of a platform for collaborating with stakeholders. The commission does not have a unit staffed with competent people for engaging in dialogue with civil society and the public. This impedes civil society contributions to CR-SEEDS. An important dimension of this problem is the commission's lack of appreciation of (and unwillingness) to offer financial and material support to civil society and creative individuals capable of raising the level of CR-SEEDS. It is worrisome that the financial support from donor agencies (UNDP and Korean government among others) are strictly monopolized by the public sector thereby excluding civil society.

The perception of participatory development by the State Planning Commission smacks of restriction of the strategy to mere invitation to hear and see what other stakeholders (the government) think and are doing about development contrasted to practical collaboration and participation of all stakeholders as has been institutionalised in Brazil and most of South America as well as in some rural development projects in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria (Ingwe 2009; Hijab, 2001).

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE CR-SEEDS PROCESS

Civil society activities in the CR-SEEDS-1 and CR-SEEDS-2

The network of CSOs in the SEEDS process in Cross River State is one of the most organized and serious programmes concerned with and contributing towards achievement of the goal and objectives of the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategizing in Nigeria. Members of the network (including the Gender Action and Development, GADA; Centre for Research and Action on Developing Locales, Regions and the Environment, CRADLE and Rainforest Research and Development Centre, RRDC, among others) have also been active in facilitating the SEEDS process at the national (NEEDS), LGAs (LEEDS) and community (CEEDS) levels. Apart from other regular work related to development management, in the state, the network has organized three formal CR-SEEDS events: a consultative forum in GRADO premises in Calabar municipality; a consultative stakeholders' forum on engendering the CR-SEEDS on 3 June 2008 at the Mary Slessor conference hall of Channel View Hotel, Calabar and a training course on "engendering the SEEDS process" held at Axari Hotel along Murtala Muhammad highway, Calabar municipality 1 - 3 July, 2008. Besides, as a network, members have as individuals and organizations managed research programmes and actions aimed towards promoting economic empowerment and development strategizing by incorporating the SEEDS goals and objectives into their usual development programmes ranging widely from gender, sustainable energy, environmental management, fo-

restry, natural resource management and HIV/AIDS to other sustainable development sectors.

Others have submitted several research-derived papers analyzing various sectors covered in the CR-SEEDS-1 as expert committee on the CR-SEEDS working group on gender (with support from UNIFEM). It is likely that the papers submitted by the network were not properly incorporated into the formulation of the zero-draft of CRSEEDS-2. Although the work emphasized gender, the network considered that standing alone, gender inequity could not be addressed effectively. Therefore the analysis of issues mainstreamed gender into almost all sectors. Evidence of this exist in documents such as GADA's report of the training programme on "engendering the SEEDS process (GADA, 2008) and reports of research aimed at analyzing the current situation in all the sectors covered in the CR-SEEDS-1 (2005 - 2007) (Ingwe 2008). Consequently, the network currently possesses a corps of professionals with considerable specialist knowledge and experience in the various sectors of the CR-SEEDS-1 as a basis for preparing better for the CR-SEEDS-2. Additionally, the network has in its membership accomplished professional researchers competent in the special disciplinary fragment of regional development management and also those who have demonstrated tremendous activity in research and publication in economic empowerment and development strategizing in peer-reviewed journals, books and reports.

Competent civil society network dedicated to the CR-SEEDS in the state

There is abundant evidence that civil society working in various sectors of the economy exist in Cross River State. These include in increasing number of about 10 non-government organisations, community-based organisations, and faith organizations that have been contributing towards the resolution of the enormous challenges confronting the social, economic and environmental problems of the sub-national region of Cross River State, Nigeria, Africa and the world. There are NGOs and civil society people in the state, whose sterling expertise in multiple disciplines (from climate change, sustainable environmental management including renewable and efficient-energy, forestry, sustainable development and HIV/AIDS among others. Owing to their outstanding performance and qualities, they are attracted to work as consultants and creative individuals and organizations for various agencies under the United Nations system and global forums representing the African continent in global commissions and committees and so forth.

CR-SEEDS-2's ignorance of cultural potentials for economic growth

Without attempting to present civil society's critical analy-

sis of the 150-page CR-SEEDS-2 in this paper (due to space and time constraints), civil society points out that in addition to excluding the population engaged in most of the 14 officially recognized economic activities included in the national statistics, the CR-SEEDS-2, which was restricted to only agriculture, tourism and forestry fails woefully to creatively devise strategies for harnessing the cultural potentials of the people of the state for reducing poverty and unemployment. The State Planning Commission and its consultants fail to satisfactorily describe and formulate strategies for harnessing cultural potentials in the CR State to achieve the goals of reducing poverty and unemployment and also catalyzing economic growth and value re-orientation deserves examination briefly at this juncture. It is disappointing that the CR-SEEDS-2 could devote only one paragraph on page 17 to the description of the cultural attributes of the state. One page is obviously inadequate for representing the diverse cultural potentials of the nearly three million people of Cross River State, speaking 39 languages besides English and French and representing about nine percent of all (440 such languages) spoken in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics 2006: 41-53; State Planning Commission 2008: 30-31). The diversity of languages spoken in the state indicates the cultural diversity including dance vocabularies, among other cultural attributes existing in the region. There is awareness of competent, experienced, highly motivated and creative experts in civil society organizations in the state working with UN agencies towards harnessing the cultural resources of the region for socio-economic empowerment. The Government would gain immensely by working in partnership with members of civil society networks to leverage the quality of the CR-SEEDS-2 and also achieve economic empowerment for the benefit of all involved.

Tremendous progress has been achieved in developing capacity, among other issues, for harnessing cultural potentials and cultural expressions for promoting poverty reduction and catalyzing economic growth from recent and ongoing work of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) of the United Nations' agency: World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). Being Nigeria's one of only two members of the prestigious IGC, one of the members of the network of civil society in the CRSEEDS process (CRADLE) could have brought its creativity, knowledge and experience in harnessing cultural heritage potentials for catalyzing economic growth and job creation to leverage the planning of actions under this sub-sector. Additionally, a member of the network also serves as an African regional representative and International Steering Committee of the reputable Energy Efficiency Global Forum and Exhibition, which organizes forums rotationally in various continents thereto attracting a crême of the stakeholders in the energy sector from the worldwide community (www.ngcradle.org).

org).

DISCUSSION

Ignorance of the debilitating effect of poverty by the CR-SEEDS-1 and 2

Although Governor Imoke claims to be concerned about the serious poverty afflicting the people of the state, his 7-point agenda myopically concentrates on only three sectors (agriculture, tourism and forestry). This means that the poor who are not engaged in these three sectors are doomed to extinction since the 7-point agenda excludes those outside these sectors. The flaws in this agenda include the fact that agriculture employs only 29.97% of the state's population while the remainder (70.03%) are occupied in about 14 other officially recognized non-agricultural economic activities (NBS 2005, NBS 2007). Besides, the two other sectors (tourism and forestry) included in the 7-point agenda are yet to become fully operational and still being developed by mostly the government. The state's tourism sector has so far emphasized the rather seasonal Cross River State Christmas festival especially the "carnival in Calabar", which lasts for barely 32 days and two days (or a little longer) respectively. Therefore, temporary and indirect jobs created during the season could not be considered "decent jobs" by the government. The state government's interest in forestry is in anticipation of the financial gains that could be derived from the emerging earnings from carbon sequestration (that is, using forests as carbon sinks as a means of receiving payments from countries of the North). The defects in the tourism sector include ignorance of the strategies for harnessing the cultural potentials (for example, heritage and expressions), which the state's population seems to have comparative advantage (Ingwe 2009).

Consistent exclusion of civil society from the CR-SEEDS as the extinction of our Common Future

During the course of the preparation of the CR-SEEDS-1 (2005 - 2007), civil society in the state were, in a way similar to what CRADLE is suffering, invited to the process only on the eve of the public presentation of the zero-draft. Obviously, that manner of invitation was deliberately aimed at getting civil society to endorse the document in order to claim to the organizations that have been offering financial support for the new planning strategy that the plan was the product of a multi-stakeholder partnership in order to sustain the flow of assistance. This attitude has been deplored severally by this network on Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, which has comprehensively reviewed the CR-SEEDS-1 and observed several defects. Another defect that de-

serves mention at this point is the inadequate reporting of the achievement of the CR-SEEDS-1 (GADA, 2008).

While traditional development planning expects that a comprehensive review of previous plans form the foundation for planning new actions in subsequent planning endeavours, it is disappointing to note that what has been described as a “review of the CR-SEEDS-1” in the CR-SEEDS-2 (the reason why civil society were invited to the meeting with the State Planning Commission executives on December 26, 2008) turned out to be a one-page statement of vague claims that were not quantitatively substantiated. Notice that the CR-SEEDS-1 covered 184 pages including profuse promissory statements of targets that were to be achieved between 2005 and 2007. Considering that the network of civil society working on the CRSEEDS process in Cross River State had earlier reported a longer and more detailed review of the CRSEEDS-1 (GADA 2008), the one-page review of CR-SEEDS-1, which covered three years (2005 - 2007) as contained in the zero-draft of CR-SEEDS-2 is not only grossly inadequate to say the least, it demonstrates the State Planning Commission’s urgent need for assistance from the active network. The Commission’s one-page review is grossly inadequate because it fails to inform on the public’s expectations regarding the extent to which targets set in the CRSEEDS-1 (in all the sectors of the economy of the state) were achieved or otherwise and is criminally silent about the huge funds running into several billions of Naira (Nigeria’s currency) spent during the process (State Planning Commission 2008). How then can these publics, invited to be part of the presentation of the subsequent plan (the CR-SEEDS-2) be assured that this new plan would not go the bad way of its predecessor?

The persistent exclusion of civil society (currently in form of an invitation to endorse a nearly completed plan on the eve of its printing and publication) does not only violate the new paradigms of pursuing development by the failure to consult (and this is a seriously abused term, in Cross River State development-speak), it effectively forfeits opportunities to draw from the competence, knowledge, experience and potentials of individuals and organizations who have gained recognition by reputable organizations as leaders in multiple disciplines and professional fields and in various sectors of the economy.

From “planning without facts” in the 1960s to “planning without stakeholders” in the 21st century

At this juncture, it is apposite to reflect on what has become a culture of failure of development planning in Nigeria’s Federal Republic. In the 1990s, when Nigeria’s first National Development Plan was being launched and implemented, of course with all its parochial and parasitical elitism, the eminent emeritus professor Wolfgang Stolper published his classic book that described Nige-

ria’s development planning approach at the time as “planning without facts”. That is while the development planning paradigm for the developing world generally was fundamentally flawed by the domination of “experts and government and their representatives” in the planning process, there was another defect in Nigeria’s first and subsequent national plans up to the last decade of the 20th century: the nation’s plans were not based on evidence (information derived from analysis of data and research) (Stolper, 1966). Recently, it was reported that “planning without facts” still hampers Nigeria’s development planning till date (ingwe et al., 2008).

How “planning without development stakeholders” in the age of participatory development management is being promoted in the CR-SEEDS process

Irrespective of the radical shift in development planning paradigm towards the inclusion of multiple stakeholders, the CR-SEEDS have since the advent of the economic empowerment and development strategizing initiative of the National Planning Commission of the Presidency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria systematically excluded the civil society and other stakeholders. This defective development strategy manifests in the deliberate issuance of late invitations to the civil society and other publics through radio announcements. It is a strategy that suits functionaries of the government who desire to monopolise the process of development planning (of course, without management) but wish clandestinely to claim that civil society was part of the process by the vice of their participation in the public presentation of the plan document. The problem with this strategy is that the brevity of public presentations of the plans (about two weeks for the entire state of a population of nearly three million, several towns out of which only three were scheduled for the purposes) is that it is an effective way of providing opportunities for government functionaries and their consultants to rationalize their opinions on policy, targets, strategies and related development issues without receiving innovative ideas from the “publics”, which are supposed to be beneficiaries of development planning.

A major problem with the invitation of civil society to participate in the public presentation of the CR-SEEDS-2 requires statement. Having taken at least 17 months (nearly two years since the inauguration of the Imoke governorship on 29 May 2007) to the date of the public presentation to produce the zero draft of the 150-page-long CR-SEEDS-2 and full of the “top-down” ideas and biases of the State Planning Commission and its consultants, the “public input” invited through the radio claimed to incorporate the “public input” received into the plan. Ruefully, that is grossly ineffective and impossible to accomplish within the one week to be devoted to that exercise. At the meeting of the State Planning Commission executives and their own civil society supporters, the

“public inputs” were expected to be received and incorporated between 22 and 28 December 2008 that is, only five days! Apart from giving civil society only five days to contribute to the CR-SEEDS-2 (compared to at least 17 months taken by the government and its consultants), the State Planning Commission’s promise to ease the input collection by electronic means by supplying civil society with the electronic copy of the format for making the input was not fulfilled (verbal speeches at the State Planning Commission’s meeting with civil society, 22 December 2008, 1500 hr local time). This was happening despite civil society’s previous advice that there was ample scope for prevention of such bad practices (GADA 2008).

Similar experience and opinions by civil society and faith organization

As if that was not enough, the visual quality of the graphics (tables and figures) meant to depict some of the key points of the document are severely marred by mediocre layout planning. Most of the tables appearing on pages 28 – 31 (among other tables) in the zero-draft of the CR-SEEDS-2 document, were unnecessarily contracted and illegible thereby complicating the commentary invited. The problem of exclusion of stakeholders from development management in Nigeria at the national level was expressed by the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) during its meeting in Calabar, in early 2007. The Catholic Bishops appealed to the Nigerian government to widen the space in some sectors such as education, for the active participation of the church and faith organizations, which they believed could manage the sector more effectively and cost-effectively (Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, 2007).

Conclusion

The CR-SEEDS process has since inception in 2004 - 2005 systematically excluded key “publics” and stakeholders in civil society, NGOs, faith organizations, private sector and communities thereby preventing them from participating in and determining the actions that are capable of facilitating their empowerment: reducing poverty and unemployment and promoting economic growth and value re-orientation. The exclusion of stakeholders has been perpetrated by government functionaries and violates the new global paradigm of development planning that emphasizes participation. The consequence of this poor approach has been the dismal performance of the CR-SEEDS-1, which failed woefully to cause observable, experiential, statistical or quantifiable improvements in the state’s economy under the multiple sectors for which policy thrusts, targets, strategies and funding for implementation were set at the outset of the plan. The exclusion of competent civil society from consultations resulted

in the rather narrow conception of the 7-point agenda of the state government, which lacks an all-inclusive multi-sectoral strategy for reducing poverty and unemployment. Therefore, improvement in achievement or effectiveness of the CR-SEEDS-2 process will result from radical changes in opening the development management space for competent civil society and other stakeholders, some of whom possess tremendous experience, competence and potential in economic empowerment and development strategizing. However, development governance would be successful by supporting civil society financially and materially to contribute optimally to the CR-SEEDS process. This support will enable members of the network to bring their competence, experience and potential in other sectors of the economy to leverage development management beyond gender, which has been much of the focal point of its meritorious work so far.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

Considering the difficulty faced by the State Planning Commission in reviewing the performance of the CR-SEEDS-1, as shown in the zero-draft of the CR-SEEDS-2, the network of civil society working on the CR-SEEDS process presents a resource for assisting the State Planning Commission in several ways. The network presents or possesses the competence, experience and potential to add value to the advancement of CR-SEEDS-2 through participation, collaboration and partnership with the network towards raising the standard of the state’s planning and management that is capable of achieving mutual benefits for the public, realizing the goals and/or objectives of reducing poverty, and unemployment and stimulating economic growth and value re-orientation. Perhaps most urgent and imperative is the need for the CR-SEEDS network to design its own active programme for collaborative monitoring of the implementation of final CR-SEEDS-2 that eventually get published by the State Planning Commission. It is very important to avoid future inability to comprehensively review the CR-SEEDS. Considering existing evidences and experiences of the reluctance of the State Planning Commission in adopting serious participatory development strategies involving partnership with civil society (which can effectively mobilize and inform other stakeholders especially poor rural and urban communities and so forth), through avoidance and snubbing of the network that has been devoted to the CR-SEEDS process, it is high-time organizations (for example, the European Union and UNDP among others) that have been supporting the CR-SEEDS-1 and 2) promoted good governance by extending their support (financial and material) to committed civil society network as a means of deepening its engagement in various facets of the CR-SEEDS process.

Good governance in the CRSEEDS (and by extension NEEDS) requires the application of the standard method-

logy of The Access Initiative (TAI). This involves participatory agreement by stakeholders on the terms of the partnership in the development process including the timing of consultations with stakeholders, terms of monitoring and evaluation of the plan produced, the way inputs to the plan should be made, incorporation of environmental impact assessment, social impact assessment and so forth. These should be documented in order to guarantee better balancing in representation of the stakeholders at the "decision making table" such that marginalization and perpetuation of the "top-down" approach is avoided in future. Besides, the time has come for civil society to be more proactive by initiating separate (civil society) versions of the CR-SEEDS-2 and subsequent ones, as instruments for adding innovations, creativity and competence that could seriously support the CR-SEEDS process. This should be done without getting daunted with the inevitable dubious excuses by the State Planning Commission claiming lack of time, and funding to justify and rationalize the way the current zero draft of the CR-SEEDS-2 reads. The reluctance of government, through its representative (State Planning Commission) to employ good governance (participation and partnership with stakeholders) of development beckons for urgent actions to resolve the persistent poverty and unemployment. There is need for systematic support from the international development community for local (Nigerian) civil society to engage the Planning Commission in Cross River State in order to increase the participation of grassroots people that is, the development aspirations of the majority of the populations of the vast rural areas who have for the decades of post-independent Nigeria been excluded from development schemes designed by successive governments in the interests, profit and benefit of the elite. Civil society organizations must pioneer and champion the incorporation of essential aspects of sustainable development such as environmental governance, sustainable (renewable and efficient) energy, cultural heritage and health care among other sectors) as a means of providing government with new directions towards the achievement of sustainable development in the region. In this regard, the Centre for Research and Action on Developing Locales, Regions and the Environment (CRADLE) has proposed and developed programmes in most of these multiple sectors to nurture a collaborative civil society perspective of economic empowerment and development strategizing that emphasizes more creative, representative and effective planning founded on evidence-based research and studies of various hundreds of communities and the 18 local government areas that constitute the state and also based on a sound geo-demographic analysis of population distribution, resource sharing and socially conscious or sustainable development. One of the meritorious achievements of CRADLE is the creation of The Access Initiative (TAI) Nigeria, a national coalition of civil society committed to

the promotion of good governance in the environmental social and economic sectors in Nigeria. TAI Nigeria is a recognized partner of the worldwide TAI family involving partnership with about 45 nations in all continents of the world (www.theaccessinitiative.org). This presents an asset to the CR-SEEDS process in most sectors of the economy especially for reducing degradation of the state's environment and society (poverty, unemployment and valuelessness) among others. On behalf of civil society, CRADLE hereby solicits support from well meaning organizations and governments in order to raise the current standard of economic empowerment and development strategizing in Cross River State and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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