

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN NIGERIA: ARGUMENT FOR AND AGAINST

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ABSTRACT

The Constituency development project has been in existence in Nigeria for more than a decade now. This decentralisation arrangement is considered very relevant because it has the potential of provoking rural and community development. However, this crucial arrangement has not yielded commendable outputs in Nigeria. Thus, this paper examines the arguments for and against this veritable initiative. To achieve the objectives, the study used qualitative approach. Information were sourced from existing literature on the practice of the scheme in other climes such as Kenya and India, where it has been existing for a long period now in order to borrow some best ideas to enhance our practice in Nigeria. The study also reviewed relevant documents related to constituency development projects in Nigeria. David Easton version of system theory was adopted to underpin the study. From the documents reviewed, some prominent challenges such as corruption, lack of need assessment of what communities want before contracts are awarded and other procedural blunders were found. These issues weigh heavily against the realisation of the policy goals. Hence, the paper supports the discontinuation of the policy, but with a condition. The condition is that the policy can be continued with if the indelible recommendation made in this paper could be judiciously implemented, because the policy itself is not bad, but for the implementation. Accordingly, the paper recommends that a structure like District Authorities through which can provide their inputs, as obtains in India should be put in place. This structure should appoint implementing agencies after a project might have been recommended by the MPs in conjunction with the community. This strategy breeds checks and balances in the system and perpetually decreases corrupt tendencies. Also, funds should be made non-lapsable. A fund not fully spent in a financial year should be rolled over to the following year and needs assessment should be carried out before contracts are granted. These are among other future directions provided in the paper.

Keywords: *National Assembly, Implementation, Constituency, Development, Projects.*

Introduction

The constituency development project is a developmental game plan schemed to encourage community development in our different constituencies in Nigeria. The projects are executed by means of a strategic instrument called Constituency Development Fund (CDF). This funding scheme is a critical resource intended to improve development at the community level in Nigeria. It is a channel through which the federal lawmakers derive funds for the execution of projects in his/her locale. It is a Fiscal Decentralization Initiative (FDI) transferred from the federal government to the electoral constituencies for expenditure on local development projects to address specific needs (Zyl, 2010, International Budget Partnership, 2010). The major thrust of this funding arrangement is to avail the members of the National Assembly with the financial facilities to execute socio-economic programmes in their communities so as to advance equitable development and mitigate poverty at the community level.

This decentralization initiative, the CDF, equally called Zonal Intervention Fund in Nigeria, has been in existence since 2009 (Udefuna, Jumare and Adebayo, 2013). Within this long historical period running, a decade now, the execution of the plan in our different communities in Nigeria left much to be desired. Consequent upon this, it has been criticised by different individuals and groups of people that it ought to be scrapped. In fact, contentions abound that the functions of the legislative officials are to make law, provide endorsement to budget, guarantees that the executive remains accountable in executing the budget and debate major issues in the house. With the enormity of these jobs in their hands, many believe that they may not be able to effectively carry out their statutory obligation. From this perspective, this paper examines the argument for and against the Constituency Development Projects and Fund in Nigeria with the view to proposing whether the initiative should be sustained or eliminated. To achieve this objective, the paper is separated into the following segments. The first section is the introduction. Section two reviews the relevant concepts like constituency development project, constituency development fund and adopted a theoretical framework. Section three considers the implementation of the constituency development project in Nigeria putting

into consideration the role of National Assembly in the implementation process. Section four reviews the experience of other countries with a long history of the scheme for the purpose of borrowing best ideas adopted there to enhance the practice in Nigeria. The fifth section provides hypothetical arguments for and against the scheme and eventually reduced it to the reality in Nigeria. The intention is to reveal theoretically the extent to which the constituency development projects and fund is a solution to development financing at the grass root level of governance in Nigeria. Section six, draws conclusion and provide relevant recommendations that can enhance the implementation of the initiative in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Constituency Development Project

For a better understanding of constituency development project, it is vital to x-ray the concepts like project and constituency separately. When explicitly discussed and the ideas are combined, then it will be possible for a clear definition of the constituency development project to emerge. A project is an undertaking by a group of individuals to produce special results which are under the triple imperatives of time, cost and scope (Filicetti, 2009). What the foregoing definition means is that all projects have defined objectives and targets of which, when accomplished under the triple limitation of time, cost and scope then the project is said to be fruitful. Project objectives could be social, economic or financial (Field and Keller 1998).

A constituency on the other hand is a community or an area to by an officeholder. It is a community whose electorates send representatives to the parliament. The constituency is a government electoral environment. In different countries, it refers to a region which countries had been partitioned for electoral purpose, and from which the legislative members are chosen to serve in a parliament (Benjamin, 2014). If a common understanding has emerged from the two concepts explained, then, constituency development projects could be seen as those works, or activities executed by either the central government or state in return for the parliamentary members as part of house support on issues that are vital (Yusuf, Yusoff, and Zengeni, 2018). Dogara (2016) did not mince words when he defines it as developmental activities proposed and executed by the national lawmakers or the House of Assemblies, through different Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs). In this paper, constituency

development projects can be seen every activities embarked upon by the Members of Parliament (MP) for the purpose enhancing the living standard of the people at the grass root level via Constituency Development Fund (CDF) as policy apparatus.

Constituency Development Fund

Constituency Development Funds (CDFs) is a policy apparatus which commits public funds to benefit certain political subdivisions through allocations or spending decisions influenced by their representatives in the national parliament (Muchiri, 2014). Similarly, it can be seen as financial facilities intended to accomplish socio-economic advancement at the local levels through the financing of locally structured projects and enhanced community engagement (Gikonyo 2008). It can also be defined as locally-based development financing instrument that channels money from central government specifically to the electoral constituency for local infrastructure projects (Phadaless, 2016). The fund is intended to help the masses residing at constituencies via local government development projects. Besides, it is meant to accomplish fair spreading of development resources among constituencies and to rationalize irregularity in grass root development occasioned by party politics. It is utilised in grass root development related projects specifically those targeted at waging war against poverty at the local level. A good example of such projects includes potable water, health and educational facilities, construction of feeder roads, etc. Therefore, in this paper, CDF should be seen as a fiscal decentralisation policy targeted at enhancing the living standard of people in the remote regions that are often neglected during the preparation and allocation in national expenditure plans.

Theoretical Framework

System theory was employed to guide this study. The dimension of the system theory utilized is the Eastonian system analysis for studying a political system. As demonstrated by David Easton (1965), the theory has four segments. These include the input (which involves the forces generated from the environment, for example, demands, supports and resources (data, materials), and so forth; the conversion mechanism (which comprises of different institutions for example legislative bodies, executive and bureaucracy etc). The conversion system serves as the processor of input into output, which are authoritative allocation of values. The

authoritative allocated values or outputs constitute the public policies (Ikelegbe, 1994). This is the third segment. Consequently, public policies are the response of the political structures to environmental needs and pressure. Feedback is the fourth components. It is the information given back to the environment regarding the performance of the outputs. The reactions from the environments constitute the inputs and the cycle continues.

Narrowing the analysis above to our paper, public policy making and implementation in Nigeria should embrace the above approach. Inputs for policies should be generated from the environment. To make constituency development project a reality, constituents should be the primary sources of inputs for the felt and anticipated needs of their people. Communities via their district authorities should create the choice of projects and submit to the law makers representing them who will process and attract funds to the project from the government. When this is done, the projects will reflect the felt needs of the people and by extension create a sense of belonging in the people. This is participation in practice. When the tenets of this theory are applied, no doubt, some negative trends such as corruption, lack transparency, accountability etc associated with constituency development projects in Nigeria will be a thing of the past. The significance of the theory to the paper is that it provides a better explanation of policy process. It demonstrates a cyclic procedure in which the political framework converts into policies, the wishes, needs or put succinctly the constituencies' problems or that of the larger society into effective practice. Recognition of this procedure by members of the national assembly in Nigeria and even beyond will nip in bud some knotty problems facing the implementation of constituency development projects in Nigeria.

The Role of National Assembly in Constituency Development Fund and Projects in Nigeria

The idea of constituency development was nursed by the National Assembly of Nigeria during the early administration of President Obasanjo in 1999 (Tunji, 2010, cited to in Udefuna, Jumare and Adebayo, 2013). However, the idea went into a deep eclipse because of its controversial nature, but made a comeback in 2009 (Udefuna, Jumare and Adebayo, 2013). The Federal lawmaker presented this demand to the executive arm of the government primarily to cushion the pressure from their constituents

to avail them the dividend of democratic governance. Viewed as a vital policy instrument, the executive did not hesitate, but gave express approval for the zonal intervention fund or the constituency development fund. Matching words with actions, the aggregate of N545, 000,000 and N1080, 000,000 was approved for the upper and lower chambers respectively to jump start their constituency development projects. The breakdown shows that Senators in the upper chamber and House of representative members in the lower chamber attracted N5million and N3million each in this order (Busari, 2018). Interestingly, the spending pattern for the Zonal Intervention Fund has been increasingly stretched in recent time in Nigeria. In 2018 budget estimate, the sum of N100 billion was dedicated for the constituency development projects for the Federal Lawmakers in the upper and lower chambers of the National Assembly of Nigeria in the thirty-six states of the Federation including FCT (Onuba, 2018, Busari, 2018).

However, there is a slight distinction from the initial fund released during the Obasanjo administration in terms of the sharing formula between the two chambers. The N100 billion was to be shared in the proportion of 60:40 percent. In this arrangement, the House of Representative gets N60 billion, while the House of Senate attracts N40 billion respectively to initiate and execute their constituency development project (Busari, 2018). The determinant factor for this proportion can be linked to the number of members in the two chambers. The Upper house has a total population of 109 members, and the lower house has an aggregate of 360 members. As lofty and laudable the arrangement is, the popular saying "that all animals are equal and some animals are more equal than the others" fittingly applies here". The leadership of the House removes the sum of N20 billion out of the N40 billion allocated to the entire Senators to fund projects in their constituency. Similar arrangement subsists at the lower house, as the total of N20 billion is deducted for her leadership as well (Busari, 2018). Undesirably, the remaining amount is also shared equally among the Geopolitical Zones. States in each of the Geopolitical Zone and by extension, the whole members of the two chambers, including the leadership of the Houses still benefit from the remaining amount. What is deducible from the foregoing is that the entire arrangement is blurred with a lot of challenges. In the main case, the entire arrangement was characterised with procedural blunders. It is unusual to apportion funds for projects that its identities are obscure. The practice whereby, the government approves funds for projects, which are obscure, the locations is

hidden, the cost of the project is likewise concealed is not the best practice. In fact, it amounts to putting the carts before the horse, and by extension aggravate corruption. Again, some Geopolitical Zones are likewise short-changed utilizing equality as the yardstick for the allocation of the resources among the localities. In comparative terms, for example, the South East of Nigeria has the following states: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_East) and North West has Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebi, Sokoto and Zamfara (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geopolitical_zones_of_Nigeria). It is unequivocal that the North West has more states than South East, and will draw in less funds than the South East. There is no point, treating entities not equal as equal.

Also, criticisms have been levelled against CDF as a conduit pipe for emptying the scarce financial resources out of the Nigerian economy (The Nation, 2017, Babatunde, 2018). For example, President Obasanjo, the pioneer of the CDF, blamed the National Assembly in 2010 for conniving with contractors executing constituency projects and consequently collect kickbacks (The Nation, 2017). Some agencies have been identified as aiding and abetting the corrupt practices being perpetrated by the national assembly. The lawmakers lodge some of their projects in the budget of the agencies like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Small and Medium Enterprises and Development Agency of Nigeria, Lower Niger River Basin Development Agency (LNRBDA) (Busari, 2018). Busari proved his allegation through a critical examination of the capital expenditure of SMEDAN. Busari stated that the financial plan of the agency for four consecutive years, spanning from 2013 to 2016 has been on a steady increase. In 2013, the budgetary allocation was N960 million. It tipped to N2.7 billion in 2014. It stood at N778 million in 2015 and skyrocketed to N1.8 billion in 2016. Busari further asserted that SMEDAN proposed N2.18 billion for capital project in year 2018, however the legislators increased it to N9.52 billion, more than the budget of the last six years. The reason for this ugly pattern, as indicated by Busari was partly attributed to SMEDAN's mandate of promoting and encouraging developmental projects and rendering supportive services to quicken the advancement and modernization of MSME activities (<https://www.smedan.gov.ng/>). With the mandate, the agency executes project like; trainings, sensitisation, youth and women empowerment, supply of materials and so on (Busari, 2018). The National

Assembly as could be seen is not helping matters with regards to the implementation of constituency projects in Nigeria.

Experience of the Implementation of Constituency Development Projects in Kenya and India

In recent times, parliamentary participation in grass root projects and in community development has been advancing in some countries, including Kenya, Pakistan, India, Jamaica and Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Namibia and Southern Sudan, Bhutan, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Mongolia and India. Others are Honduras, Jamaica, Philippines and Solomon Islands (Langran, 2002, Center for International Development, 2005). Interestingly, the structure and the operation of CDF differ from country to country and in some cases, even within a nation, with respect to the amount, allocation, and principles and utilization. IBP (2010) distinguishes some critical features of CDF that create discrepancies in operations and types of CDF across nations and which eventually have direct bearing on the performance of projects. These include the following: Quantum of funding available per constituency; method for distributing funds between constituencies (degree of targeting), legislative framework; governance: institutions and frameworks used to choose, actualize and screen projects; checks on corruption; public access to data, and community participation in project prioritization.

From above, the paper attempts a comparative analysis of how CDF works in Kenya and India with the objective of drawing lessons of some interesting procedures in these nations for Nigeria. The choice of Kenya and India was informed on the backdrop of the fact that they have a long history of the practice of CDF in the developing part of the world and with relative success stories.

Kenya

The chronicled development of CDF in Kenya depicts that CDF was launched in Kenya in 2003 with the passage of the CDF Act in 2003 by the ninth Parliament of Kenya (Muchiri, 2014). At least, 2.5 percent of the ordinary income, as indicated by the Act was reserved for expenditure on CDF projects. The rule for appropriating $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 2.5 among the 210 constituencies in Kenya was equality, and poverty index constitutes the

second guideline for sharing the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ of the reserved funds to cater for the poorest constituencies.

CDF in Kenya has experienced various difficulties since its beginning in 2003. These include, inter alia, under utilization or non utilization of the finished projects (Bagaka, 2008). It was found that lawmakers were trading with CDF as a means to acquire political supports (Baskin, 2010 Gutierrez-Romero, 2013), non recognition of tendering and procurement controls (Awiti, 2008) and lack of inclusion of the community members in project identification, prioritization, monitoring and assessment (NACCSC, 2008). The vast majority of these issues border on corruption and mismanagement. There were situations where new projects were initiated and started, while the current and the ongoing ones were left to deteriorate due to under funding by the legislators (Bagaka, 2008). The result is that, funds which could have been diverted to other formidable projects were squandered starting new events when the current ones have not been finished. These circumstances regularly emerge, particularly, when an MP is not re-elected. Notwithstanding the foregoing pitfalls, finding of a research by Awiti (2008) reports over- inflation of project costs and under supply of procured materials. This gave an unholy opportunity for the MPs to amass the scarce fund to enhance themselves to the detriment of the public welfare. One fascinating development is that, the Kenya system accommodates the participation of the community members in the CDF committee. Nonetheless, the representation in the committee is exclusively dictated by the MPs (IBP, 2010). What this predicts on the negative side is that "he who pays the piper dictates the tone". Members of the committees exist at the whims and caprices of the MP. The MP could overrule any choice from them without their agitations. This manifests practically as the members of communities were denied from project identification, implementation, monitoring and assessment (NACCSC, 2008). The corollary of this is that, where projects are started at all by the MP, they may not mirror the felt and anticipated needs of the target recipients. Such elephant projects would dependably stay under used and best case scenario non-operational (Bagaka, 2008). This is another aspect of corruption. The culture of corruption is further encouraged in Kenya by the local CDF office and national CDF Board through hoarding of project information (IBP, 2010). For example, CDF Accountability Project conducted study of Nairobi's constituency in 2008, and found that constituents were unable to acquire project information from the

appropriate authorities located in the constituency (IBP, 2010). Par adventure, authorities at the local CDF office should release records by any means, it must be explicitly affirmed by the board or the MP. These officials might hide under the guise of official secrecy of government information, yet the intention might be blurred with a great deal of impunities capable of foiling socio-economic advancement at the local level.

On the positive side, CDF in Kenya might be commended in the light of the fact that the Kenyan framework makes arrangements for community representation on the CDF committee, however, the representatives appointed are by the legislators. Distinctive interest groups, for example, religious organisations, youths, NGOs/CBOs and women are represented in CDF committee (IPB, 2010). More so, it is fascinating to recognize that CDF serves as an instrument that checkmates the conduct of an MP in Kenya. Emerging fact from the 2007 election in Kenya, as indicated by Gutiérrez-Romero (2013) demonstrates that the chance of an MP re-election was dictated by two principal factors. These in particular, are how the fund was spent and residents' ethnicity. Where the fund was well managed, the MPs were commended and returned without delay and the reverse is the other way round. Again, apart from the fact that equity shapes part of the criteria for distribution of the CDF in Kenya, other critical characteristics like poverty index and population of the areas were considered. Bagaka (2008) attested that the fund was shared in the proportion of 75:25. In Kenya 75 percent of the fund was similarly shared among the 210 constituencies, while the remaining balance was shared to the poorest constituencies. Indeed, even with this, sparsely populated areas with low poverty level receive less funds than thickly populated areas with high poverty rates. The foregoing distribution standards, according to Bagaka attracted equity and allocative efficiency to CDF in Kenya.

Another interesting improvement with regards to CDF in Kenya was the development towards the professionalization of the fund with the sole aim of enhancing its management and compliance. This transformational approach which came on board in 2007 prompted the enlistment of the fund or account manager who was posted to the constituency by the Board (IBP, 2010). They advise the board with respect to suitability of proposed undertakings and serve as conciliators between the board and the CDF councils. As indispensable as this course of action may appear, it has been reported that the fund administrators face

intimidation and threats from the MPs and the committees, particularly when questions with respect to recording keeping and expenditure are raised.

India

India is another country that has a long running history of the constituency development project like Kenya. As opposed to Kenya, where it is called CDF, India version is called Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS). It was a Central government fiscal policy declared on December 23rd, 1993 (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoS and PI, 2016, 2018). At the inception, it was domiciled under the Ministry of Rural Development, but later migrated to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The central target of the scheme is to empower MPs to suggest works of a developmental nature with accentuation on the creation of durable and dependable projects based on locally felt needs to be taken up in their Constituencies. MPs by this mandate can just suggest key priority sectors, and the endorsement conceded by District authorities, who is saddled with the duty of deciding on an appropriate executing Agency to actualize prescribed developmental work by the MP. Some of the preferred sectors include, among others, health care and sanitation, drinking water facility, education, Agriculture and Allied activities, and self-help and group advancement (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki>).

The fund system has been updated severally since it was announced in the parliament on 23rd December, 1993. The main guideline was absolved in February 1994 and changed in December 1994 with the emphasis on the idea, usage and checking of the plan. Further modifications were done in February 1997, September 1999, April 2002, November 2005, August 2012 and finally in May 2014. The last correction was considered a hearty one, since it depended on abundance of experience for a period of 22 years, and more so, for the fact that it received contributions from stakeholders, Members of Parliament, both the Committees of the Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha, NABARD consultancy administrations (NABCONS) and Comptroller and Auditor General of India in its Reports (MoS and PI, 2016). Some of the basic implementation rules or critical features of the arrangement are highlighted below:

(i) Funds must be committed to "durable projects" like, physical infrastructure for learning, transportation, sanitation, electricity, and so

forth. Private, religious or business establishments are unacceptable, just like other programmes, for example, literacy drives or vaccination activities. (ii) A predetermined segment of every MP's fund must profit Scheduled Caste (Dalit) and Scheduled Tribe (Adivasi or indigenous) populations. (iii) After an MP prescribes a project, an administrative officer (called a "District Authority") vets it for feasibility and designates an implementer, which can be a local government body or a "reputable" Non-government organisation (NGO); business contractors are disallowed. (iv) The district authority must assess at any rate 10% of all works under execution consistently. (v) MPLADS funds are "non-lapsable," implying that unused sums can be brought forward to the following year(s), with the goal that the MP can spend them later on. (vi) Under the National Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2005, any citizen has the right to get information on any part of MPLADS and the work under it. (vii) A stone or metal plaque recognizing the sponsoring MP is to be "for all time raised" for each completed project (Blaire, 2017:99)..

A critical assessment demonstrates that items (iii) to (vii) are mechanisms built into the guideline to entrench transparency and accountability. For example, the District Authority acts as a check on the MP by confirming the feasibility of projects, appoints implementers, and furthermore inspect no less than 10 percent of works under execution. The funds are non-lapsable. This is an indispensable feature that empowers continuity of projects, unlike in some system where funds are mopped up toward the year's end, leaving projects deserted without completion. Moreover, every citizen has the right to get data with respect to every aspect of the MPLADS. This is capable of demobilising any shoddy deal. The stone or metal plaque is a fundamental wellspring of inspiration. It implies a sign of recognition and a stimulant to accomplish more. It depicts that failure, corruption, mismanagement, and so forth is disgusting and should neither be recognised nor be associated with.

The scheme has been noted with an unfaltering increment in funding since its inception in 1993. Rs. 5 lakh was assigned for every MP, between 1993-1994. In 1994-95, it moved toward becoming Rupees one crore per annum per MP constituency. Correspondingly, it was scaled up to Rs.2 crore per annum per MP constituency. This was further stepped up to Rs.2 crore from 1988-9, and Rs. crore from the money related year of 2011-12 (The Economic Times, 2015).

The implementing organs of the scheme are composed as follows. Policy formulation, release of funds and prescription of monitoring instrument is done by the Ministry of statistics and programme implementation. Monitoring, supervision and coordination of the scheme is done by the Nodal Department in each state/UT. The Nodal Department performs the foregoing functions in conjunction with the districts and other line Departments. Information with respect to funds released to the District Authorities is made available to the State Nodal Departments by the Government of India. Implementation subtleties on the status of MPLADS are given by the District Authority to the Government of India and State Nodal Department. The District authority also selects the suitable implementing Agency for the execution of the prescribed work by MP. What the above suggests is that a few checks and balances have been built-in to guarantee that funds are wisely and judiciously used for the works approved by the MP.

An unprecedented deficiency of the MPLADS in India is that, MPs have been authorized to recommend projects that could meet locally felt needs of the community; be that as it may, the constituents of the projects are actually excluded from providing information or set structures that enable the participation of communities in project identification and implementation with the MP. Another captivating component of MPLADS that makes it obviously not exactly the same to CDF in Kenya is that, if an elected Member of Parliament finds the need to contribute MPLADS funds to a place outside that State/UT, or outside his/her constituency in the State, or both, the MP can recommend works within the range of Rs.25 lakh in a fiscal year (cdn.s3waas.gov.in).

The common ground is that, the two nations have consideration and special funds reserved for the vulnerable groups in each constituency. Much the same as in Kenya, equal amount is set aside for the communities in India too. Despite the fact that the amount and the percentage may vary, India like Kenya similarly allocate some funds to their vulnerable groups, usually called Scheduled Cast populace and Scheduled Tribe Population. Works costing 15 percent and 7.5 percent are reserved separately for the groups. In fiscal terms, these mean Rs. 30 lakh (63 000 USD) and Rs. 15 lakh (32 000 USD) separately.

Argument for and against Constituency Development Fund and Projects in Nigeria

In this context, the paper considers the degree to which the CDF is in reality the answer for development financing difficulties at the grass root level of governance. The contentions rely on whether there is a need to maintain CDF as a decent financing technique or be eliminated and afterward scout for an option in contrast to it. This section therefore, presents the hypothetical arguments first and gradually reduced it to the Nigerian circumstances.

Argument for CDF

The following contentions have been placed for CDF.

Bureaucratic Procedures are boycotted: The typical practice whereby the financial transfer from the central government are channelled through various regulatory organs of government before it gets the final approval is not seen with the processing of CDF. What obtains here is that the fund is channelled specifically to the local level without fundamentally going through the administrative layers (Kimenyi, 2005). The favourable contention for CDF in this situation is that, such a significant number of administrative hindrances that may slack efficiency and adequacy of the administrative hurdles and by extension flop efficiency and effectiveness of the government development programme are wrecked. Thus, hypothetically, it is expected that fund is acquired timely, spent quicker and spent on the correct projects. Fervent admirers of the CDF are of the view that it is a veritable instrument for accomplishing tangible development results at the grass root level at a quicker rate (IBP, 2010).

Engenders Grass Root Participation: Citizen's participation on issues that influence their life in the local community creates the opportunity for them to remain educated and articulate their perspectives on the difficulties the community faces (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Pano Institute West Africa (PIWA), 2009). The significant contention for the CDF is that it invigorates grass root voices and interest on projects that will mirror their felt needs. The belief is that via their representatives, people residing in the rural communities will have the opportunity to be actively involved to make a project and expenditure decisions that augment their welfare comparable with their felt needs and preference (Kimenyi, 2005). Peoples' participation can be facilitated and encouraged through the town and ward meeting and forming village

development committees. However, IBP (2010) noticed that excessive power of a few Members of Parliament (MP) undermines public participation of the grass root inhabitants on identification of projects in numerous countries as they are denied of access to crucial information for the purpose of secret deals. IBP (2010) contends that, except if legislation and institutions are designed to check MP's influence and protect genuine public participation, the benefit of conveying funds directly to the grassroots and to be prioritised by the community may be defeated.

Determinant Factor for Re-Election of Political Office Holders:

The deep rooted saying that “evil that a man does, lives with him and after him” practically plays out on constituency development funds. The contention is that, if delivery of constituency development project by means of CDF can attract votes from the electorate, then, non-delivery can equally deny the MP same. Non execution or poor execution of CDF can cost the lawmaker the re-election. What this means is that CDF can be utilized to restore and control government officials to deliver on their promises. For example, the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) reported that 60% of the lawmakers from the ninth parliament did not return after the 2007 races since they were not able to make CDF perform for their communities (IBP, 2010).

Argument Against

Despite the favourable contentions for CDF, the following are the weaknesses of the plan.

Prone to Corrupt Practices: Opponents of CDF maintain the argument that CDF can trigger corruption. An average politician according to this school of thought can mishandle the major tenet of CDF, which is the general prosperity of the whole community by diverting the benefits to his kindred and the ethnic group. Ongoya and Lumalla (2005) argue in this direction with specific reference to Kenya, that satisfactory checks and balances should be incorporated into the system to ensure autonomous oversight, or there will be a wide open door for corruption, fraud, wastage of fund and abundant opportunity for personal or political gains. For example NACCSC (2008) reported occasions where the CDF office was situated in the MP's home or rented from the MP's building in Kenya. Others include lack of reports, feeble contract management, poor oversights and general systemic failure, courtesy of weak institutions and lack of political will.

Erosion of Separation of Power: One of the key contentions against CDF is that it disregards the principle of division of power which is a fulcrum that a democratic government revolves around. The debate has dependably been that members of the parliament are to make law and not implement projects. The idea is that if congressmen should execute projects, the efficacy and integrity of the Public Account Committee (PAC) would be grossly undermined (<http://www.nationalcouncil.bt>). Unfortunately, CDF has placed the legislative arm of the government in the position to decide and additionally actualizing government programmes as opposed to concentrating on their legislative and oversight elements of the executive (IBP, 2010).

Politicisation of the CDF: Ardent detractors of CDF have argued that CDF is not more than a patronage apparatus of MPs, who use it for distributing rents among their political supporters. This is contrary to the fundamental idea of CDF, which is the general welfare of the whole community members. Instead of concentrating on what will attract succour to the entire communities, CDF is mostly diverted towards enhancing a group of individuals by politicians, a compensation period for campaign contributions or votes. This conflicts with the principle of free and fair election as the fund gives unjustifiable electoral gains to the sitting congressman. This is in accordance with Baskin (2010), who contends that though, these same MPs do utilize the fund to respond to the development needs of their constituents; they also cultivate their own personal votes that promote the chance of their re-election.

Weakens Fiscal Efforts of the Local Government: The sensitive problem here is that rather than CDF encouraging internally revenue generating capacity of local governments, it rather impedes and weakens it. Knowing very well that the fund will always trickle down from the central government as CDF or other fiscal decentralization, most local government are not keen about looking inwardly to exploit available revenue within the local government to expand their income base. Again, the procedures CDF passes through before finally arriving in the local government negates the status of local government as a third level of government in some countries operating federal system of government. In a federal arrangement "Power and authority will be decentralized and devolved to the elected Local Governments (LGs) to encourage the direct participation of the general public in the advancement and the management of their own social, economic and ecological well being" (Ongoya and Lumalla, 2005). The

constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for example, states categorically that providing fair and accountable government, and guaranteeing the provision of services to local communities are the functions of Local Governments. In view of the foregoing, one could contend that CDF related activities naturally fall under the domain of the local governments as opposed to that of Parliamentarians. Local areas development needs ought to be determined and interventions made by the elected local governments. Accordingly, congress members ought to be dispensed with, and these funds ought to specifically go to grass roots government for similar purposes. If it is not done this way, decentralization principles have been violated. There already exists a democratic institution at the local government, consequently, there is no point for a similar structure which the CDF represents. This means, duplication of efforts, time, energies and other resources.

CDF Encourages Inequality: Hypothetically, CDF underscores the principle of equal distribution of resources, however, in practice, the reverse is what obtains. Equal distribution can be contended particularly where the equal sum is proposed for all the constituencies where the population is not the same, and also where the needs might be dissimilar for different constituencies.

Based on the hypothetical arguments presented above, the paper introduces a situational analysis utilizing some empirical cases in Nigeria. From the available empirical evidence, it has been noted that constituency development project has some principal benefits for the Nigerian society as well certain pitfalls. On the negative side, it has been discovered that the execution of constituency development projects does not protect the interest of the recipients in many constituencies in Nigeria. Corroborating this, Adamolekun (2016) affirms that there is zero public participation in the determination of projects and that the implementation arrangement lacks clarity. Adamolekun ascribed the cause to the boundless roles assigned to the members of the National Assembly in the determination of projects to be funded. As can be inferred from the preceding sentence, the legislators are required to mobilize the general public in the constituencies to prioritise development projects while the implementation of the projects ought to be the obligation of the CDF manager and committees in every constituency which is the basic practice some climes like Kenya and India. Simply because this culture is deficient in Nigeria, most constituency development projects normally fail to mirror the felt and expected needs of

the general public where they are executed at all. This negative culture brings forth different negative results like corruption, absence of transparency and poor accountability culture. For example, in 2010, when actual execution of constituency development projects between year 2007 and 2009 was evaluated in six states (Adamawa, Edo, Imo, Jigawa, Kwara and Lagos) across the geopolitical zones, non-functional projects, incomplete and abandoned projects and ghost (non-existent) projects were found (Adamolekun, 2016). BudgITNigeria (a civic technology organization) refer to in Adamolekun (2016) tracked 436 constituency projects in 16 states over the six geopolitical zones where 221 projects were abandoned, 145 were completed, and 77 are on-going. It further detailed that projects were signed off and contractors were paid, with practically zero follow-up reporting and evaluation by government authorities. Validating Adamolekun presentation, International Center for Investigative Reporting (2018) cited a director of a popular borehole drilling company in Ekiti state, who blamed the failure of constituency borehole in the state on corruption. He was quoted verbatim thus:

When politicians want to get the contract, they can get it for N10, but they would want to pay N4 or N5 for it, and the contractor does exactly a job of that sum for them and leaves. In no distant time, the borehole fails and the community is back to square one.

Similarly, in Abia state, International Center for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) (2018) revealed the monstrous patterns in the implementation of the constituency development projects. Community Service Organization (CSO) and Women in Aid Collective (WACOL), as indicated by the ICIR conducted a survey on constituency development projects in Abia State and found that the huge number of federal constituency development projects in the state were abandoned or not-started -at-all. A sports centre situated along a major road, a walking distance from the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC) office in Ukwa West LGA, already overgrown with grass was cited as a down to earth example.

Once more, the argument that constituency development fund erodes the principle of separation of powers plays out in the implementation of constituency development projects and fund in Nigeria. The 1999 Constitution allots responsibility for services that are most impactful on the standard of living of citizens in the rural communities to states and local

governments, for example, primary education, primary health, agriculture and town/village and rural roads. Because majority of lawmakers' interventions that are touted as mechanisms for making rural residents think about "the presence of the Federal Government" identify with these functions, they constitute encroachment on the constitutional functions of state and local governments.

In any case, we cannot conclude that the initiative is totally a failure in all ramifications. There are areas where it yielded positive results like the situation displayed thus. In certain areas it has been effectively used to improve the life of the recipient. For example, ICIR (2018), attested that N40million was allotted in the 2017 zonal intervention/constituency projects for the procurement and installation of six transformers in the Abia Central Senatorial zone. Representatives from each of the LGAs by ICIR (2018) concurred that each acquired transformer had been respectively installed in specific communities, for example, AmiziOlokoro in Umuahia South, Awomokwu in Ikwuano, Isingwu in Umuahia North, Nsulo in IsialaNgwa North, and IsialaOkpu in Osisioma. BudgITNigeria (a civic technology organization) cited above tracked 436 constituency projects in 16 states across the six geopolitical zones where 145 were completed, and 77 are on-going.

On the final note, constituency projects as a promise made by lawmakers, amidst election campaign to bridge development gaps for their people has gained relative ground in some places. Tragically, constituency development projects have generated heated debate, with allegations and counter-allegations of dubious practices around their implementation as can be seen from the preceding paragraphs. Consequently, many have contended that it ought to be scrapped. In any case, this paper contends that the initiative has the potential of inducing development in our rural regions in Nigeria. It is a unique legislative practice capable of boosting development in an emerging democracy like ours just as obtained in other countries of the world. In this manner, the paper proposes that in the event that some of the ideas suggested can be implemented, then it should not be eliminated. If the recommended strategies suggested can be put into practice, it will inevitably bring succors to the Nigerian societies. However, where the reverse becomes the case, it should be eliminated, because the shortcomings as discussed in this paper outweigh the positive side.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper examines the argument for and against the implementation of the constituency development project in Nigeria. The paper established that the initiative has the capability of stimulating rural and community development and by extension national development. Notwithstanding, it is uncovered that the plan is clouded with a lot of hurdles, for example, corruption, lack of popular participation, promotion of inequality among others. These issues weigh heavily against the realisation of its fullest advantages. The paper indicates that the initiative should be discontinued because the disadvantages discussed in this paper overshadowed the advantages. The initiative has been found a brilliant opportunity for the lawmakers to divert public fund meant for providing public goods for the general public into their pockets. Similar experiences are obtained in the two countries studied. Nevertheless, there are some positive practices that can be borrowed to improve the theory and practice with regards to Constituency Development Projects in Nigeria. For instance, in India, there exist District Authorities that deal with the selection of agencies that implement the constituency development projects recommended by the MPs. This strategy breeds checks and balances in the system and perpetually decreases corrupt tendencies as the members of the public are engaged to make their inputs to create a choice of project for the law makers who process it and turn out as outputs for the communities (a practical application of the Eastonian system theory). This should to be encouraged in Nigeria. Again, in India, funds are made non-lapsable. A fund not fully spent in a financial year stands to be rolled over to the following year. This enhances continuity of projects. Such practice is likewise recommended for Nigeria. Also, if a Member of Parliament finds the need to extend a helping hand via contribution of MPLADS fund to other places outside that State/UT, or outside the community within the State, or both, the MP can identify projects within the limit of a certain sum in a related fiscal year. This singular practice ought to be encouraged in Nigeria as it will foster the unity of this nation. Once more, a movement towards the professionalization of the fund where a fund or record manager are recruited and posted to constituencies with the sole aim of enhancing fund administration and compliance as obtains in one of the countries studied should to be upheld in Nigeria. This is a transformational approach capable of giving the initiative a face lift. Finally, there is a need for constituency needs assessment before granting contracts. Constituency

should get what they need and not what the representatives want. The paper also submits vehemently that if the strategies recommended in this paper can be implemented the policy initiative should be continued.

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