

Corruption and Community Development

Corruption is undeniably one of the significant obstacles to national development and particularly to community development in Nigeria. Siphoning and misappropriation of public funds, nepotism, and cronyism are interconnected crimes that impact negatively on people and development. The detrimental effects are particularly acute at the community level, especially among marginalised communities as diversion of public resources deprives communities of much-needed resources for infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other essential services. Corruption exacerbates inequality by concentrating wealth and resources in the hands of a few, while the majority of the population remains impoverished. This wealth gap hampers community development efforts as resources are not distributed equitably to address the needs of all members of society.

For many years, management of Nigeria's public funds has been a subject of concern with many public officers caught in the web of corruption allegations. Notable amongst these were;

- ▶ The former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Godwin Emefiele who is facing trial on 23 counts bordering on abuse of office, receiving gratification, and corrupt practices;
- ▶ The former head of the Economic and Financial Crimes unit, Abdurashheed Bawa, who was suspended indefinitely for abuse of office amongst others.

In 2024, another wave of allegation of corruption and misuse of public office by public officers reveals the decay in Nigeria ranging from;

- ▶ the former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Ms Beta Edu who was suspended for the approval of payment of N585.2 million into a private account of a civil servant, the predecessor, Sadiya Umar-Farouq over allegations of corruption in the handling of N37.1 billion social intervention funds during her tenure as minister.
- ▶ And finally the National Co-ordinator and Chief Executive Officer of the National Social Investment Programme Agency, Halima Shehu, who was arrested in connection with an alleged ₦44billion money laundering.



These are just reported cases as many go unaccounted. The continued diversion of public resources to private pockets by some public office holders rather than investment in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other essential public services crucial for community development, negates the principles of leadership, equity and justice. Undoubtedly, widespread corruption has left rural communities more vulnerable, leading to near absence of basic amenities like access to clean water, electricity, healthcare, and transportation infrastructure. Corruption is not limited to government and its institution as individuals also enable corruption through the rent seeking and clientele approach. There are evidence of abandoned local projects awarded through compromised procurement processes - awards to family members or friends with no accountability process in place to ensure completion of projects, as well as those stopped due to unnecessary demands by community actors for compensation and gratification.

In 2019, ActionAid Nigeria conducted a social audit intervention and engagement at state and community levels to ascertain the status of community development projects in Nigeria through the Strengthening Citizens' Resistance Against Prevalence of Corruption (SCRAP-C) project in collaboration with the ICPC.

 The action tracked **2045**, both executive and constituency projects worth **₦11,488,950.22** in **28 states**.

The finding showed differential in stages of completion of awarded projects:



The outcome of the investigation led to;

93 contractors and **259 legislators** moving back to project sites.

The consequence of corruption is dire and as obvious, impacts the vulnerable communities and its people more. Firstly, it results in the misallocation and embezzlement of funds earmarked for development projects, depriving communities of essential resources and infrastructure. Secondly, it erodes trust in government institutions and fosters a culture of impunity, where accountability and transparency are often lacking. It is also a driver of inequality and further widens the gap between rural and urban communities by diverting resources away from rural development projects or siphoning funds intended for such initiatives.

People living in rural places deserves quality public services that meets their needs. To achieve this, the Nigerian government must ensure that corruption is dealt with in a manner that deters new entrants by enforcing legislations and policies that regulates corruption in Nigeria.