

QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF LOCAL PARTICIPATORY
STRUCTURES AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN OYO STATE

Final Report

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Poverty Assessment Qualitative Studies

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the emphasis on and potential benefits of local participatory structures and service provision in community development, there have been inconsistent responses in different localities. While some localities are reportedly enthusiastic, contribute to and enjoy the benefits of participatory structures, others have been lukewarm or gravely inactive. This appears to be as a result of community perceptions of the potential benefits from participation. Therefore, using qualitative techniques this research investigated perceptions particularly among the poor of their possibilities to participate in local government. Basically, the study compared the perceptions of and responses to participatory structures among one urban and three rural areas in Oyo State. These communities were drawn from three local government areas; Ibadan South-West, Akinyele, and Egbeda.

First, using semi-structured indepth interviews, information on institutions through which the poor are intended to participate in local government and development of service provision was obtained from both state and local government officers. Furthermore information on the measures used to provide information for people to participate, the views of the

officers or the level of participation, and their sources of the priorities of local residents was obtained.

The main focus of the study is to rapidly access the poor themselves to obtain detailed first-hand information. Therefore, using focus group discussions (FGD) and semi-structured indepth interviews, information was obtained from local leaders and residents in the four communities selected.

Findings showed that in urban and rural settlements the residents felt themselves to be inadequately informed about rights, obligations and opportunities to participate. Many of them were unaware of the structures and institutions available for participation. Where some level of awareness existed, they expressed lack of confidence in the methods available for their participation. Past and current experiences with the government, perception of deception by and suspicion of government bodies coupled with frustrations arising from conflicting expectations from both the government and the people give the poor the feeling of helplessness. In their view the government has nothing to offer the poor.

These negative feelings were also reflected in their interaction with the police. The poor wanted little or no interaction with the police due to their experience and

perception of the police. Like with other government bodies, they felt that poverty places them at a disadvantage in their dealings with the system. In addition, the poor are mostly unaware of resources available to assist or advise them in their relation with the legal system. Rather, they depended solely on social support system.

A comparison of the perceptions of the poor with regard to local participatory structures and those of the government officers revealed that there existed contradictions in the perceptions of those intended to serve them. Finally, in line with the above findings, the report discusses policy implications and recommendations were suggested.

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