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## Impact Assessment of Two Poverty Reduction Projects in Nigeria Confirms Participation as Key Component of Strategies for Poverty Alleviation

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### Abstract

Incorrect Information about a problem is identified as bottleneck to problem solving. Poor understanding of the roots causes of a problem is energy and time wasting. Historical analysis of community work shows suspicion between researchers and communities in Nigeria based on poor analysis, un-fulfilled promises and poor results of development strategies caused by a top down approach.

An impact assessment of two projects in Nigeria (Zamfara Grazing Reserve and Benue Agricultural Development Program) both used bottom up approaches; provided forums for greater rapport and intensive involvement of participants. Greater dialogue between Fulani nomads and sedentary Hausas in the grazing reserve was mirrored in Benue where researchers and farmers created room for greater understanding of their common problems, generating collective ideas for solving them, developing broad ownership of solutions and putting in place credible monitoring strategies. Post implementation assessments showed high levels of sustainability in the implementing of agreed strategies.

Involvement of stakeholders recognising gender, age, cultural barriers, and socio-political differences of 'community members' helped diminish social constraints allowing the cross-fertilisation of ideas. Inspired by the process and results, external partners have helped to provide communities access to basic services through enhanced participation in the process of national development. Leading to higher living standards and providing basic premise upon which the Nigeria Federal Government is expecting both the NEEDS and SEEDS to be achieved.

**Keywords:** Acceptability of change strategy, cultural barriers, gender concerns, impact assessment, poverty reduction, participation as key strategy, poverty alleviation, social impediments