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INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN BORDER COMMUNITIES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE BORDER COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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ABSTRACT

Inclusion strategies are essential for integrating border communities into national development plans. Ensuring border communities feel valued and supported can increase cooperation in security and economic initiatives. The study examines inclusive development in border communities via the activities of the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) to analyse socio-economic development initiatives, community interventions and participation strategies. Idiroko and Seme Border Communities are used as case studies through the theoretical lens of the bureaucratic and inclusive development theory. The mixed-method approach was utilised; questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics and interviews with stakeholders in the case study areas to triangulate the data. The findings show that the politicisation of the BCDA as an agency has made it shift from its core mandate of providing physical infrastructures and poverty alleviation in border communities. Also, the study established no significant relationship between the existing infrastructures and social amenities in the Seme and Idiroko border communities and the attainment of all-inclusive development due to inadequate inclusion of stakeholders and fluctuations in government policies. The principle of derivative justice reinforced by the customary ownership of land creates a platform through which the principle of derivation, as stated in Section 162(2) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, as amended, could be expanded to cater to the needs of border communities. The impoverishment of border communities is a complex problem rooted in structural neglect, regulatory constraints, and inadequate investment. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that considers these unique challenges and opportunities.

Keywords: *Border Communities, Customary ownership, Derivation principle, Distributive justice, Inclusive development*

INTRODUCTION

The activities of state and non-state actors, globalisation, and political and economic dialecticism continue to undermine lasting development in border communities (BCs), bringing these areas to the spotlight (UNDP, 2020). The fragile economic development of BCs influences the lifestyles of those living in the region and has made the area a conduit pipe and safety nets for illegal activities. In international relations, BCs are often approached from the perspective of realism (security/power) and liberalism (jurisdiction on trade and migration). Studying BCs within these two frameworks has substantially undermined the plight of the people living around and along international borders. Globally, the situation of border communities differs significantly due to differences in nations' sizes, systems of government, stages of development, and socio-cultural dispositions. However, it is essential to mention that many countries are moving beyond the challenges by designing and mapping out strategies that position their border communities to an optimum level (Adesina, 2019). For instance, the promotion of principles, initiatives and beliefs that entrench inclusive development among the different actors in the Flensburg border

community in Germany has reduced conflicts, disagreement and subdued institutional weakness, especially in the allocation and distribution of resources (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2013). Likewise, Asia has upheld a long tradition of investing in infrastructure in border areas due to its ability to yield far-reaching economic benefits (Akiko, 2020).

Conversely, border communities in Africa are disenfranchised not only on the physical level but also at the economic and political levels; they lack social amenities and excellent roads, which hamper the movement of goods and persons, the condition of life is evident from the low level of Human Development Index due to inadequate public health system, high level of unemployment, and a large number of poor household due to limited opportunities (Andriansyah, 2019). Border communities in Nigeria are marginalised, isolated, abandoned, and lack social amenities, notably good roads, water, power (electricity), and sanitary facilities, causing difficulty in the movement of people and goods in the area.

To address these challenges, the Nigerian Federal government established the Border Community Development Agency (BCDA) in 2003 to promote wide-ranging development in border communities, particularly infrastructure (Faolex, 2020). The Agency's goal is to work with a long-term policy document in the form of a five-year master plan that will aid the Agency in the systematic and structured development of border communities. The Master Plan is expected to align with the vision of the government as encapsulated in Vision 2020 (BCDA, 2024). Vision 2020 was hinged on a diversified economy, an improved standard of living, economic transformation, social development and poverty reduction.

The incorporation of inclusion strategies to the governance and management of border communities through the BCDA Master Plan aligns with the perspective of frontline Scholars of development like Mahub ul Haq and Amartya Sen, who argue that development must not only be inclusive but also strengthen peoples' capabilities and increase their wellbeing towards a satisfactory standard of living and income per capita (1985). Thus, inclusive development delineates development that embraces marginalised persons, areas, and nations in political, social, and economic processes for improved human security, empowerment, and social and ecological sustainability.

However, despite these efforts, the challenges of Nigeria's border communities persist. Such conditions activate the emergence of several problems: smuggling, inter-border clashes, drugs and human trafficking, prostitution, and small and light weapons proliferation (Andriansyah, 2019). Therefore, well-established studies are needed to explore the BCDA approach to addressing the challenges of border communities in Nigeria. Also, the necessity to interrogate the BCDA interventions and initiatives to understand the obstacles and exigencies of factors militating against inclusive development at the border communities has become pertinent. Hence, the imperative of this study.

Conceptual Analysis

International Border

The concept of Borders has been widely "contested" among scholars. In simple terms, a border is a dividing line separating the territories between different nations. International borders are a polysemous concept encompassing identity, politics, and society; they span the sectoral, social, and symbolic (Xingting, 2020). Dokoupil and Havlicek (2002) view the international border as delineating or demarcating two neighbouring regions. At the same time, Megoran (2005) aver that

although international borders are seen as the skin of the State, they are actually the fundamental part of it.

Adesina (2019) opines that international borders are a fundamental element of human interaction and factors that facilitate human communication. Zartman (2010) asserts that international borders are lines that run across land and through people due to their multidimensional, complex, ambiguous, and often contradictory nature. Baud and Van Schendel (1997) buttresses this by describing international borders as a "marker between them and us", showing contending desires for sameness and difference via a demand for order, control, and protection. Akengin (2010) describes international border as a line that separates the areas of benefit and dominance.

From the 21st century, borders have been highlighted as active forces and resources in global and national political, social, and economic relations. Thus, international borders will likely exhibit more significant variability and contingency in the future, making their study vital in understanding an expanding range of issues (Diener & Hagen, 2022). Subsequently, borders have become integral factors in the advancement of cordiality, collaboration, development, peace, cross-border crime prevention and the safety of a country (Oji, 2018).

Globalization empowers locality and intensifies the need for protected areas. Hence, we will have more borders, not fewer, and more walls because we are building more bridges (Bobbitt, 2016). This connotes that the concept of international borders has evolved beyond the traditional view of a dividing line between countries. Instead, they are spaces, an institution that performs a complex function of filtering (Andreas, 2022). It becomes apt to state that international borders reflect the government's control, management, efficiency, and dynamism, the consequences of which determine if it is a hot spot or a melting pot.

Therefore, international borders have become formal and informal social institutions of spatial and social practice rather than simple demarcations of places (Diener & Hagen, 2012) featuring in global disputes relating to security, migration, trade, and natural resources. Green argues that international borders should not be seen just as physical objects at the end of a nation; they are concepts whose metaphorical and symbolic meaning must be focused on (Zaman & Coskun, 2015).

Border Communities

In the works of frontline Scholars of Border Communities, Hansen (1981), and Asiwaju (1996), border communities are globalized localities, sub-state zones, or regions whose economic and social life is notably influenced by their nearness to an international frontier. Within this definition, border communities are divided territory of a specific ethnic group, who, despite being separated by different jurisdictions, continue to see themselves as one, so trade, commerce, and kinship are not usurped by the border they perceive as invisible. Therefore, border community applies to a dynamic area or areas joined by pecuniary interest and cultural realities but suffers from being caught between different state economic policies.

A Border Community (BC) signifies a geographical area where people live adjacent to a border, whether domestic (local government area or state) or international. Jakubowski and Mischuk (2021) observed that border communities are highly susceptible to fluctuations in international relations due to national, regional, and global policies fostered by marginal socio-economic and infrastructural development, most visible is the GDP per capita. Over the years, the dynamics of the border community on the national economy have been hotly debated among policymakers, observers, and scholars. Więckowski (2019) and Nijkamp (2021) aver that border communities are often seen as an impediment to development. A country's border can adversely affect the

development of the border community by reducing the area of influence and increasing transaction costs, negatively impacting trade and production.

Capello, Caragliu, and Fratesi (2018) argue that inefficiency is a significant challenge in border communities, as they cannot utilise their resources like other regions due to their closeness to the border. Nonetheless, the nexus between the international border and the development of a nation's border community is context-dependent, and the border characteristics play a significant role in this respect. Researchers such as Okunade (2022), Salau (2022), Otor (2021), have observed that the location of border communities from the core states place them at a disadvantage in the economic planning, and when attention is given priority is often placed on the physical security of the international border to the neglect of the border communities.

Border Communities Development Agency or National Boundary Commission?

The BCDA was created by an Act of the National Assembly in 2003(as amended in 2006), with a mission to develop, be the vehicle for the provision of people oriented, sustainable and equitable development projects in the border communities, thereby ensuring their full integration, commitment, patriotism and loyalty to Nigeria (BCDA, 2024). Taking an element of the mission as stated above, 'To Develop,' according to Dudley Seers, means that a community encounters a decrease in poverty, social inequality and unemployment (Seers,1969). Corroborating this, Abuiyada (2018) argue that development is about altering the government structures to lessen barriers that preclude people from partaking in matters that touch their lives.

On the other hand, the National Boundary Commission (NBC) was established in 1987. One of the functions of the NBC as provided in part II, Sections 7(a-q) of the Establishment Act, 2006, is to promote border region development and trans-border cooperation, among others. Thus, this reflects overlapping functions between these two federal government agencies. This aligns with Steve Oransanye's Report (White Paper) of 2012 and 2022 on the submerging or scraping of federal government agencies with similar functions. The report recommended that the BCDA be subsumed as a department under the National Boundary Commission (Abdulmalik, 2025). However, this has yet to be implemented despite the approval of the Federal Executive Council on February 26, 2023.

Development

According to Todaro and Smith (2014) development is a multifaceted concept comprising the restructuring of social and economic systems to advance living standards, promote human dignity, create conditions for social justice, and enable people to participate and make choices. Development encompass a qualitative enhancement in living conditions, a quantitative rise in economic production, preservation of the environment, and the principles of governance that sustains strategies and programs towards expansion (Rabie, 2016).

Rodney (1972) assert that development is a complex process incorporating both national and individual stages, where development at the individual level means better capacity and skill, while development at the national level encompasses an increasing capacity to control internal and external relations. This implies that development is dependent upon the increased capacity of members of a society to master the laws of nature, and apply it in transforming their society.

Inclusive Development

Inclusive development delineates development that embraces marginalised persons, areas, and nations in political, social, and economic processes for improved human security, empowerment, social and ecological sustainability. Inclusive development stems from the term 'inclusiveness',

which denotes affordable access to public amenities and infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, education, water, power supply, and security (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Inclusive development emerged from the periodicals of the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2007) as a policy towards empowerment and equity centred on poverty reduction, social capital advancement (participatory decision-making and community-based steering), and human capital development (education, health care) (Rauniyar & Kanbur, 2010). From an international relations perspective, the inclusive development approach examines those included in and excluded from expanding human welfare and society, on what grounds, and how social inequality can be reduced (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Fukuyama, 2015).

Rapport (1987) asserts that inclusive development is about gaining control over one's affairs. Thus, a relational approach towards inclusive development entails analysing the causal forces (actors and factors) that produce, preserve and challenge several inequalities at the communal, national, and international levels and how these stages interact. This implies that inclusiveness demands an analysis of the actors and factors propelling inequalities among and within nations. Additionally, Hickey, Kunal, and Badru (2015) argue that politics is vital in each development phase, from determining marginalisation and inequality processes to raising awareness and recognition of these problems. Thus, the politics of inclusive development sits as a catalyst in attaining national economic development. Also, they assert that the awareness that politics plays a fundamental role in influencing the projections for development in developing countries establishes one of the most significant contributions of development theory and practice in the 21st century.

The Politics of Development

This concept analyses the political dynamics of development guidelines and processes, accentuating the governance institutions, power relations, and structures within and between nations. McLoughlin, Ali, Xie, Cheeseman, and Hudson (2024) assert that the politics of development is entrenched in the inescapable reality that politics determines (who gets what, when, and how) the daily challenges confronting people globally in accessing the significant resources they need to survive and thrive. They argue that politics is not only an impediment to development but also a way to attain it.

The politicisation of economics by developing countries has enabled the evolution of malignant bureaucracies and governments and empowered them to control all aspects of society. Arrogant and distended bureaucracies are inclined to instigate political, administrative, and economic corruption to become the standard rather than the exception, muddling issues and responsibility and making it hard to hold government officials accountable (Mohamed, 2021). Akinpelu (2020), citing ICPC (2019), revealed that the BCDA is one of the principal agencies lawmakers use to misappropriate funds.

Derivation Principle and John Rawls' Principle of Distributive Justice: The Nexus

Derivation is reimbursement for the usage of land, a payment for the loss in revenue or other economic activities through the utilisation of the lands of any units in government (communities) for national resource generation (Tom, Bassey, Ekpo & Ebong, 2021). The principle of derivation is an element of fiscal federalism that demands that a percentage of the total revenues collected from any state within the nation shall be returned to the state as a form of payment for its contribution to national finance. This principle dates back to the colonial administrative system in Nigeria, when official revenue allocation was introduced in 1946 and in an attempt to provide a just formula for allocation the Philipson Hicks Commission Report of 1951 introduced the broad principle of derivation, independent revenue, national interest and needs (RMAFC, 2022). The

Derivation principle upholds that all income credited to a specific region should be allocated to it (Philips, 1971). The principle of derivation is one of the avenues by which the national government addresses the imbalances and inequality characterised in Nigeria's revenue allocation system. Adangor (2015) contends that the derivation principle does not serve as an effective instrument of distributive justice.

There is growing interest in several nations to formalise the rights of communities to protect their lands against infringement from interlopers, whether private organisations or the State (FAO, n.d.). In Nigeria, the government holds ownership of all lands. However, the Land Use Act of 1978 directed that lands outside the urban areas shall be under the control and administration of the Local Government, within the area of jurisdiction of which the land is located. Also, Section 44 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) adjures the government to pay compensation for forcibly acquired land and Section 29 of the Land Use Act of 1978 describe the process for compensation when a right of occupancy on land is revoked by the State (Akintonde, 2020). Similarly, Nwogu (2023) assert that the Land Use Act did not stamp out customary ownership of land, as customary land tenure was and is still the primary mode of land ownership in Nigeria.

According to John Rawls, justice rests on fairness and equality. Though the distribution of income and wealth might not be the same, it must be to everyone's benefit (Rawls, 1971). The theory of distributive justice describes the situations under which particular distributions and processes are alleged to be "just" or "fair". Aristotle opined that distributive justice for a people or community requires that the government act reasonably and equitably as the allocator of benefits, rights, and rewards (Bowie, 1971). The pursuit of the most adequate standard for defining the principle of 'fair allocation' in any distributive system has been debated among scholars. Adangor (2015), using the utilitarian theory of distributive justice, argues that in any given distributional situation involving public goods and services, the distribution which offers the greatest happiness for the most significant number is the one which is just. Robert Nozick argues that the objective of distributive justice is not to attain any specific outcome of distribution but rather to ensure a fair exchange process (Maiese, 2020).

In this regard, this paper argues that the Seme and Idiroko international borders are situated on community lands, thus entitling the community to some form of compensation from the internally generated revenue at these borders. Although the derivation principle focuses on natural resources but the principle of derivative justice reinforced by the customary ownership of land creates a platform through which the principle of derivation, as stated in Section 162(2) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, as amended can be expanded to cater to the needs of border communities. This has become necessary due to the infinitesimal efforts of the BCDA.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bureaucratic Theory

As propounded by Max Weber, the bureaucratic theory examines how public agencies and institutions' structure, organisation, duties, and systematic administration impact political outcomes. It rests on the pillars of streamlined managerial processes, effective coordination, specialisation and impersonality. Conversely, Karl Marx viewed bureaucracy via the lens of an agency that promotes the interest of the dominant class at the expense of the masses (Edino, Bisong & Inakofe, 2021). The complexity of the bureaucratic theory revolves around the politicisation of bureaucracy, political interference and corruption.

The Bureaucratic theory remains one of the most significant approaches that critically elucidate the effect of government efficiency, political power and public policy. This theory is relevant to this study as it completely embraces and exposes the key governmental actors involved in public policy formation and implementation in Nigeria's borderlands; the National Assembly, Public administrators like the BCDA and Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), and the community stakeholders such as the traditional rulers and youth leaders. While this theory sheds light on the processes of activities within the BCDA, from the approval of projects to their implementation in the border communities, its weaknesses include a lack of sensitivity to the needs of residents of border communities, inflexibility, and inadequacy. This necessitated the combination of the Inclusive Development theory.

Inclusive Development Theory

The Inclusive Development (ICD) approach is a response against exclusive capitalist approaches, highlighting economic interest over social wellbeing. This theory draws from the efforts of development scholars, economists, environmentalists, and social scientists. However, frontline scholars include Amartya Sen, Sudhir Anand and Joyeeta Gupta. The Inclusive Development Theory leans on six pillars: Equity, Empowerment, Human Rights, Participation, Social Justice and Sustainability (Gupta & Pouw, 2017). Anand and Sen (2000) posit that people are both the end and the means of development, so development must be human-centred. The inclusive development approach must embrace marginalised societies (border communities) in economic, social and political processes to improve human wellbeing, social sustainability and empowerment.

Thus, the ICD approach is relevant to this study as it attempts to address issues of societal inequalities, equitable distribution of resources, equal access to opportunities and participation of stakeholders in decision making and development of initiatives to check inefficiency and inadequacy that have characterised many BCDA projects. For instance, an ultra-modern market built at the Idiroko border community has remained abandoned due to its distance from the main community. The World Bank (2001) opines that inclusive development involves a top-bottom analysis of the responsiveness and accountability of institutions targeted at addressing the concerns of vulnerable people.

METHODOLOGY

The geostrategic location of Seme and Idiroko border communities as the study area is invaluable in understanding the complexity of national economic development, which is a foundation of inclusive development. Seme border is the busiest land border in Nigeria, and it generates the highest government revenue among Nigeria's international borders (Ogundipe, 2019; Asomba, 2015). Idiroko, on the other hand, is highly porous, with over a hundred illegal routes between the border community and the Benin Republic. The creek in Ado-Odo increases its permeability (Foyeku, 2018). These factors, amongst others, make the Seme and Idiroko border communities most suitable as the case study areas.

Mixed method research design; 440 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in the Seme and Idiroko border communities of Lagos and Ogun State, respectively, out of which 395 were returned and found usable for this research. The descriptive statistics were used to analyse the nexus between BCDA interventions and inclusive development outcomes. The interviews were later carried out with major stakeholders in the study area and key informants in border agencies and institutions to interpret the experiences and views of border community participants.

PRESENTATION/ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

Research Objective 1: To assess the actions of the BCDA in advancing an all-inclusive development in border communities.

Name	Description
Border Community Development Agency(BCDA)	The first theme focuses on the Border Commission's activities and historical background.
Historical antecedents of the Commission	This is a narration of the historical antecedents of the Commission
Objectives and functions of the Agency	The Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) is a development agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria with the mandate to ensure the economic, sustainable, social, and infrastructural development of border communities in Nigeria.
BCDA minor intervention in border communities	The Commission's interventions in border communities are perceived as minimal.

Historical Antecedents of the Border Community Development Agency(BCDA)

The creation of the Border Commission has its roots in historical and political contexts. It was established during the Presidency of Olusegun Obasanjo to address Cameroon's treatment of the Bakassai people of Nigeria. This historical antecedent underscores the Commission's initial focus on mitigating international border disputes and promoting the welfare of affected communities. A community leader remarked, "During the tenure of Obasanjo as President of Nigeria, that agency was established primarily to address the challenges in border communities, particularly, how the people of Cameroon were treating the Bakassai people."

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (2018) aver that the organisation was established in 2003 by an Act of the National Assembly known as the Border Communities Development Agency Act, 2003 (as amended in 2006). The formal inauguration of the Agency's Governing Board to supervise its activities was done on December 10, 2009. The Agency's goal is to work with a long-term policy document in the form of a five-year master plan that will aid the Agency in the systematic and structured development of border communities. The Master Plan is expected to align with the vision of the government as encapsulated in Vision 2020 (BCDA, 2024).

BCDA Minor Intervention in Border Community

One respondent mentioned specific examples such as installing "K-clamp" shops (shops without doors) and lock-up shops at Seme market, which a former House of Representatives member facilitated during Bamgbose Joseph's tenure around 2017/2018. Additionally, a borehole was installed at Seme market. However, the respondents seem dissatisfied with the extent of these interventions.

Another respondent remarked that the actions taken by the Border Community Development Agency are minimal compared to what is expected, indicating a desire for more significant efforts. Their primary objective is to address issues concerning the welfare of people in border communities.

A third respondent pointed out that, for instance, a step-down transformer was installed at the Idiroko border community. K-clamp shops with a borehole and solar were built on the outskirts of the town, opposite an abandoned proposed university site. Additionally, two schools were renovated, and a borehole and toilet were

installed to improve water access. However, this is relatively infinitesimal to what is expected.

These views reflect a broader dissatisfaction with the BCDA's impact and a call for more significant and comprehensive interventions. It reflects insight into both the actions taken by the Commission and the expectations of the local populace regarding its role in addressing border-related issues and the limited scope of the BCDA interventions within border communities. This aligns with the findings of Nnadi and Okoye (2022) that the BCDA has not demonstrated the competence and capacity required for sustainable and developed border communities. Ukwu (2021) corroborate this in the article titled. 'FG agency provides transformer to border community without electricity for 11 years', he revealed that a 2.5 MVA,33/11 KVA injection transformer and Ring Main Unit (RMU) were commissioned at Ikolaje Idi-Iroko substation. However, the Onipokia of Ipokia, His Royal Majesty Oba Adeniyi Olusola Olaniyan, entreated the BCDA intervention in the completion of other projects like the Garri Processing Plant and Health Care Centres.

Research Objective 3: To examine the main challenges and limitations BCDA faces in promoting inclusive development in border communities.

Border Community Development Agency as a political creation rather than a development-oriented organisation	The Border Commission is viewed as a politically motivated entity, lacking a clear focus on development, leading to inefficiencies and underperformance in managing and improving border regions.
Competence of border commission Officers questioned	Officers within the Border Commission are often seen as lacking the necessary expertise and experience, undermining the effectiveness of border management and development efforts.

Border Community Development Agency as a Political Creation Rather than a Development-Oriented Organisation

One of the respondents' references illustrates the problematic nature of the National Boundary Commission (NBC) and the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA). The National Boundary Commission coordinates border-related activities and suffers from inter-agency rivalry and lack of cooperation, particularly with the BCDA. The creation of the BCDA, primarily driven by political motives, has resulted in an organisation that often operates independently and inefficiently. Furthermore, the National Assembly's involvement through constituency projects has diverted significant funds from essential border development, leaving these regions underfunded and impoverished. Without a clear developmental focus, the political creation of such agencies leads to mismanagement and underperformance, affecting border communities' development.

This agrees with Akinpelu (2019) findings that the BCDA has become a conduit pipe used by Nigerian lawmakers in embezzling funds under the guise of constituency projects. The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) corroborate this, and the Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) report that there is an urgent need by the Federal government to review the statutory mandate of the BCDA against Zonal Intervention Projects (ZIPs) approved

by the federal lawmakers (Olafusi,2019). Furthermore, the Constituency Projects Tracking Group (CPTG), a task force of the ICPC, affirm that Nigerian lawmakers conspire with agencies to embezzle billions of naira meant for constituency projects (ICPC Newsletter,2024).

Competence of Border Community Development Agency Officers Questioned

Two of the respondents both question the competence of officers within the BCDA. They point out that the Agency is staffed with individuals needing more expertise in border development, including politically appointed leaders who need to gain relevant experience. This lack of specialised knowledge and understanding of border dynamics hampers the Agency's ability to manage and develop border regions effectively. Competent and knowledgeable leadership is crucial for addressing the unique challenges of border communities, and the current setup needs to provide the necessary direction and efficiency. The central theme of ineffective border operations reveals a systemic problem rooted in bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, excessive and corrupt checkpoints, and a lack of competent management. These issues collectively stymie economic growth, discourage investment, and perpetuate poverty in border regions.

This resonates with Udo (2019) report, where the Council on African Security and Development (CASADE) petitioned the Presidency challenging the procurement process of the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) as it failed to meet the statutory requirements under the procurement law for bidding for government contracts in Nigeria. It was revealed that out of the list of 988 companies under the 2018 constituency projects about 815 of the shortlisted bids (over 83%) failed to meet at least one or two of the main criteria as outlined in the minimum threshold specified in the bid guidelines, which according to the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) should be known to all agencies of the federal government. Hence, this thematic analysis shows that development is hinged on the government's ability to provide the ingredients for its realisation.

Therefore, these narratives present a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities in border communities, particularly focusing on the role of the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA), the economic significance of these areas, and the importance of security. The impoverishment of border communities is a complex problem rooted in structural neglect, regulatory constraints, and inadequate investment. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that considers these unique challenges and opportunities. Only through coordinated efforts, policy reforms, and substantial investment can the cycle of poverty and impoverishment in border communities be broken, paving the way for sustainable development and improved quality of life for their residents.

The BCDA's limited interventions highlight a gap between community expectations and governmental actions. Despite some efforts, such as constructing market facilities and installing boreholes, the local populace demands more substantial and impactful projects. The historical context of the BCDA's creation underscores its potential for addressing border-related issues, yet its centralised recruitment process restricts local involvement, limiting its effectiveness and community trust. Nnadi and Okoye (2022) revealed that the BCDA has not served the integral role of synergising development efforts to improve the conditions of international border communities.

Consequently, these analyses advocate that while the BCDA and other border-related interventions have made some progress, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive and locally inclusive strategies. Enhancing security, supporting micro businesses, and fostering greater local involvement in decision-making processes are essential to achieving all-inclusive development and economic prosperity in border communities. This aligns with the OECD/Sahel and West Africa Club (2017) recommendation that the growth in cross-border trade across border

communities in West Africa will be grounded on the submission of an integration approach which takes into cognisance the region's complex political and socio-economic dynamics.

Quantitative Data Presentation and Analysis

A. Questionnaire Data Presentation

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents by Border Community

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Seme	216	55
Idiroko	179	45
Total	395	100

Source: Field Data

Table 2: Respondents' Awareness of existing projects undertaken by BCDA in their communities

Response	Idiroko Border Community		Seme Border Community	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	140	78	63	29
No	39	22	153	71
Total	179	100	216	100

Source: Field Data

Table 2 indicates more awareness of BCDA activities in the Idiroko border community (78%) than in the Seme border community (29%). These findings suggest that residents of the Idiroko border communities are more aware of the BCDA and its activities, particularly its duties and responsibilities to all border communities.

B. Questionnaire Data Analysis

The questionnaire, which was structured on a five-point Likert scale, elicited responses on the following eleven indices that aggregate to their observation on the initiatives of the BCDA with the most significant impact on all-inclusive development in border communities:

Response to Research Objective 2: Evaluate the BCDA initiatives with the most significant impact on inclusive development in border communities

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics using Mean and Standard Deviation

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
The efforts of the BCDA have substantially increased the income level of residents of the Idiroko/ Seme/ border community	1.7975	.76702	Not Significant
The infrastructure projects of the BCDA have enhanced access to safe and clean drinking water in the Idiroko/Seme border communities.	2.0304	.79917	Not Significant
The infrastructure projects of the BCDA have enhanced access to sanitation and hygiene in the Idiroko/Seme border	1.8684	.71452	Not Significant

communities			
The quality of the road network in the Idiroko/Seme border community has improved through the intervention of the BCDA	1.7924	.72828	Not Significant
The condition of existing projects undertaken by the BCDA is adequate for bringing economic development to the Idiroko/Seme border community	2.0253	.68661	Not Significant
The existing projects of the BCDA have improved access to education in the Idiroko/ Seme border communities	2.1316	.94942	Not Significant
There is sufficient public awareness of the objectives of the BCDA in the Seme/Idiroko border communities	1.9190	.67102	Not Significant
The poverty alleviation programmes of the BCDA have provided training and skills acquisition for women and youth in Idiroko/Seme border communities	1.8633	.66573	Not Significant
The government has effectively engaged Idiroko/Seme border communities Stakeholders on the policy formulation of the BCDA mandate	2.0861	.75245	Not Significant
The government has effectively engaged Seme/Idiroko border community stakeholders on the implementation of the BCDA mandate	1.8481	.69605	Not Significant
The poverty alleviation programmes of the BCDA have reduced youth unemployment substantially in the Seme and Idiroko border communities	1.9392	.68808	Not Significant
Decision rule ≥ 3.5			

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 3 provides descriptive statistics for the variable "inclusive development," created by aggregating eleven attributes measuring various aspects of inclusive development. The descriptive statistics give us an overview of this aggregated variable's distribution and central tendency. Mean: The average value of inclusive development is 33.3873. This is the central point of the data, around which the values are distributed. Std. Deviation: The standard deviation is 10.51150, which measures the dataset's variation or dispersion. A higher standard deviation indicates that the values spread over a broader range.

This reveals that respondents generally view the activities and efforts of the BCDA as inadequate or insufficient across multiple areas of concern in the Seme and Idiroko border communities.

1. Impact on Income Levels (Mean: 1.80, Standard Deviation: 0.77)

The mean score indicates disagreement with the statement that the BCDA has substantially increased residents' income levels. The higher standard deviation compared to other items suggests more response variability, indicating diverse experiences or opinions among respondents. The findings reveal consistent dissatisfaction or disagreement among respondents regarding the BCDA's effectiveness across various areas.

2. Adequacy of BCDA Projects and Activities in improving Access to Education (Mean: 2.13, Std. Deviation: 0.95)

The mean score of 2.13 suggests that respondents disagree with the statement that BCDA projects and activities have enhanced access to education in their communities. The standard deviation of 0.95 indicates moderate response variability, meaning some respondents may have slightly different views, but the overall sentiment leans towards inadequacy. This implies that the existing projects might not effectively address the community's education needs or expectations, pointing to potential gaps in project planning, execution, or communication.

3. Infrastructure Projects: Enhanced Access to Safe Drinking Water: (Mean: 2.03, Standard Deviation: 0.79) Enhanced Access to Sanitation and Hygiene: (Mean: 1.87, Standard Deviation: 0.71) Improved Quality of Road Network: Mean: 1.79, Standard Deviation: 0.73)

The mean scores indicate disagreement with the effectiveness of the BCDA's infrastructure projects in enhancing access to safe drinking water, sanitation, hygiene, and improving the road network. The score for safe drinking water is slightly above 2, indicating some neutrality but still leaning towards disagreement. The standard deviations reflect moderate variability, suggesting some differences in individual experiences or perceptions.

4. Adequacy of Existing Projects for Economic Development (Mean: 2.03, Standard Deviation: 0.69)

The mean score is close to 2, indicating a general disagreement with the statement that existing BCDA projects are adequate for bringing economic development to the Idiroko border community. The moderate standard deviation indicates some response variability but an overall negative perception.

5. Public Awareness of BCDA Objectives (Mean: 1.91, Std. Deviation: 0.67)

The mean score of 1.91 indicates disagreement with the statement that there is sufficient public awareness of BCDA objectives, with a low standard deviation (0.65) indicating consensus. This highlights a significant gap in the BCDA's communication strategies, suggesting that many community members are unaware of the Agency's goals and initiatives. Improving public awareness is crucial for gaining community support and participation.

6. Government Engagement of Stakeholders in Policy Formulation and Implementation

Stakeholders in Policy Formulation: (Mean: 2.08, Std. Deviation: 0.75). Stakeholders in Policy Implementation: (Mean: 1.85, Std. Deviation: 0.69). Respondents generally disagree (Mean of 2.08 and 1.86) with statements regarding the government's effective engagement with stakeholders in policy formulation. The standard deviations (0.75 and 0.69) indicate that these views are relatively consistent. This implies that the processes for involving local stakeholders in policy development may be insufficient or inadequate, potentially leading to policies that do not fully address community needs or have their buy-in.

The data reveals significant challenges in the perceived effectiveness and adequacy of the BCDA's projects and activities in the Seme and Idiroko border communities. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach involving enhanced project planning, improved training and communication strategies, and better stakeholder engagement. By taking these steps, the BCDA can work towards achieving more meaningful and impactful economic development and social improvement in these communities.

7. Effectiveness of Poverty Alleviation Programs: Reduced Poverty (Mean: 1.86, Standard Deviation: 0.66), Reduced Youth Unemployment (Mean: 1.94, Standard Deviation: 0.69) Skill Acquisition for Youth and Women (Mean: 1.86, Standard Deviation: 0.66)

These low mean scores (all below 2) indicate that respondents generally disagree with the statements that the BCDA's poverty alleviation programs have substantially reduced poverty, reduced youth unemployment, or provided significant skill acquisition for women. The relatively low standard deviations suggest consistent negative perceptions across respondents.

Summary of Data Analysis

While the BCDA and other border-related interventions have made some progress, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive and locally inclusive strategies. Enhancing security, supporting micro-businesses, and fostering greater local involvement in decision-making are essential to achieving all-inclusive development in border communities.

The first objective, which is to assess the interventions of the BCDA in advancing an all-inclusive development at these border communities, the mean (average value) score of 33.3873, the data's central point, suggests that inclusive development is low as the highest attainable score is 68 and half of that number is 34. The result of the qualitative analysis of the in-depth and key informant interviews affirmed that the BCDA only focus on minor interventions. Therefore, the study accepts the null hypothesis (H^0) and rejects the alternate hypothesis ($H1$), indicating no significant relationship between the BCDA and inclusive development at BCs.

Findings/ Conclusion

The study sought to assess the impact of the BCDA in advancing an all-inclusive development at the Seme and Idiroko border communities.

i. The findings establish that government interventions at the Seme and Idiroko border communities, mainly through the BCDA and its objectives, negate the inclusive development approach that explains that inclusive development must include:

- a. **Gaining mastery over one's affairs** means obtaining the power to generate and profit from new opportunities and power with united action, having a voice based on representation and social organisation. The BCDA was designed to meet the needs of and be a voice of representation for all border communities in Nigeria. However, the results from the questionnaires and interviews reveal that this is yet to be achieved. Muhammad and Sa'idu (2020) corroborate this by recommending mainstreaming border communities.
- b. **Analyse how agencies and institutions' downward accountability and responsiveness have enhanced or constrained the vulnerability of excluded or marginalised people:** the results from the interviews of key informants disclosed that the BCDA has neither been transparent nor accountable to the border communities. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission Newsletter (2023), Yusuf (2020) and Udo (2019) affirm these claims by revealing that the Agency (BCDA) has been enmeshed in various controversies ranging from disregard of the basic procurement regulations and procedures in awarding contract, violation of chapter 7, section 713 of Nigeria's civil service financial regulation that forbid agencies from paying public money into private bank account, and signing-off of incomplete contract.
- c. **Evaluate how both development and governance processes and results can be made all-encompassing and how the assets and capabilities of the communities can be enhanced:** The results of the descriptive statistics and key informant interviews showed that the BCDA projects need to be better structured, and neither has there been any project targeted at poverty alleviation, which is one of its primary objectives.

ii. Also, the study found that the politicisation of the BCDA as an agency has made it shift from its core mandate of providing physical infrastructures and poverty alleviation in border communities. This finding aligns with the politics of development as posited by Hickey, Kunal, and Badru (2015) who argue that politics is a force that can spur development as well as impede it; when politics govern society, it controls economic activities, which politicians use as economic tools to expand political power and achieve political ends; this has led to the emergence of a new class of elite in developing countries that controls both politics and economics and use them to enrich themselves

at the expense of people with low incomes. This is in line with interview responses on the hijacking of the Agency by the National Assembly, and that one of the significant challenges of the BCDA is its politicisation and hijacking by Nigerian lawmakers under the pretext of constituency projects. This is affirmed by Udo (2019) and the ICPC (2019), who referred to the Agency as a conduit pipe for embezzlement by the National Assembly. McLoughlin, Ali, Xie, Cheeseman, and Hudson (2024) assert that for the economy to be free of political control and for people to participate entirely in the economic life of their societies, the political system needs to be open and participatory while holding the political and economic elites accountable.

iii. Additionally, the study established no significant relationship between the existing infrastructures and social amenities in the Seme and Idiroko border communities and the attainment of all-inclusive development. This aligns with Mailabari and Hamidu (2015) and Asiwaju (1993), who identified that the government's neglect of infrastructure and social amenities in border communities places them at an economic disadvantage. Also, Agha, Anikwe and Ogbonna (2021) assert that power, telecommunications, good roads, piped water supply, sewage, sanitation and social infrastructure like education and health could expand border communities' productive capacity by accelerating economic growth and enhancing socio-economic development. This aligns with Akiko (2020) findings that limited infrastructure, poor human capital, border economy policy fluctuations, and storage capability in border communities limit their economic developmental potential. Onyekwere (2016) buttresses this assertion by contending that inclusive development is hinged on good governance and policies because infrastructural investment, strong institutions, a safe environment, and security are all products of government policies.

iv. Findings from the study revealed that government interventions in addressing the challenges in the Seme and Idiroko border communities have not been adequate for the following reasons: lack of inclusion of stakeholders, fluctuations in government policies, policy timing and the lack of synergy among border security agencies. This aligns with Eselebor (2020) observation that the regulated controls of border communities, infrequent border closures, and border drills had a counter effect on smuggling and criminal activities; instead, they defied the survival tactics of the border communities. These arguments strengthen the findings of this study, which state that the peculiarity of border communities demands an all-inclusive development approach in line with best global practices.

In conclusion, government interventions through the BCDA negate the inclusive development approach, for inclusive development demands that the community participate in decisions concerning their welfare. Similarly, the study raised concerns on the derivation principle of the federal government and supported the assertion that a percentage of revenue generated from these communities via the international borders should be ploughed back for their development; this is in line with John Rawls' principle of distributive justice. Likewise, it indicates that the politicisation of the BCDA is a significant impediment to its ability to achieve its objectives.

Recommendation

i. The Derivation Principle, as captured in section 162 (2) of the 1999 constitution (as amended), should be expanded and amended by the Nigerian National Assembly to cater to border communities.

ii. The National Executive Council should restructure the BCDA and remove it from the control of the National Assembly as proposed by Oransaye's (2012) report; this would redirect the organisation to the core objective of its establishment instead of a focus on the 'constituency project'.

- iii. The BCDA's mandate should be revisited to cover all-inclusive development in border communities, and the agency should be equipped with qualified personnel who understand border matters. Working with the National Boundary Commission would be a better alternative.
- iv. The Lagos and Ogun State governments, through their ministries of Budget and Economic Planning, should develop a public-private partnership scheme to attract businesses to these communities, especially in the areas of housing and social infrastructure.
- v. The Nigeria Customs Service should consider establishing a training school in one of these border communities to give them a sense of belonging and boost economic activities in the areas.

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