HUMANUS DISCOURSE Vol. 6. NO 1. 2026
ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

A historical analysis of the impact of national youth service corps on community development service in Nigeria since 1973

Samuel Wycliff[1]
Department of History and International Relations
Veritas University,
Abuja, Nigeria

Yusuf Abdullahi[2]
Department of History
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

Abstract

Studies on community on community services and development have paid emphasis on the holistic roles of associations and groups in community. Also, researches on the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme have shown the origin, significance and roles of youth corps members in their various areas of assignments. However, there is little emphasis on the place of Community Development Service (CDS), an integral aspect of the NYSC scheme. This paper, therefore, analyses the significance of the CDS as an important component of the NYSC. It utilises a multidisciplinary approach that involves the use of primary and secondary sources. The paper argued that, through the CDS,members of the NYSC have contributed in their areas of assignments, especially inhealthcare services, education, drainages, sanitation, and in public enlightenment/sensitization on social problems like corruption, drug abuse, road safety, medical care, entrepreneurial skills, among other important issues. However, the paper has identified some challenges that have affected the effectiveness of the CDS, which include insecurity, ethno-religious conflicts, electoral violence, a growing rate of banditry and kidnapping, among others.

Keywords: Community, Development, Services, NYSC,Nigeria.

Introduction

Community development service had been an integral part of human development throughout their history, as noted by Patel and Wilson.[3]Apart from the fact that it is a global phenomenon, the case of sub-Saharan Africa is not only unique, but also deeply rooted in the African tradition since the pre-colonial period, where communities, through their general belief and culture, come together to take action on what appeared important to them and their collective progress and sustainable peace. The general principles that sustain and uphold the culture of CDS in Africa were associated with self-determination (people and communities have the right to make their own choice and

[1] wycliffs@veritas.edu.ng, samwycliff@gmail.com
+2348060510055, +2349072845472
[2] yusufmahuta@gmail.com
+2348068693240
[3] Patel, L. and Wilson, T. "Civic Service in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (2014): 1-2.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

decisions); empowerment (people should be able to control and use their own assets and means to influence); collective action (coming together in groups or organizations which strengthens people's voice) and community participation. This shows that the importance of CDS cannot be overemphasized. Since it provides practical support to communities and people; it creates effort towards sustainable peace and development for a stable community and encourage togetherness because every member would have the feeling of belonging. Therefore, CDS contributes positively to societal health, wellbeing, wealth, justice and opportunity in African communities. Thus, in as much this method of African CDS was important, its original and fundamental means of building and sustaining African societies was distorted during the western imperial activities in the continent.

With theestablishment of National Youth Service (NYSC) Scheme in 1973 by the military government of General Yakubu Gowon, principally to rebuild and reintegrate the constituent ethno-cultural/religious groups of a war-torn country through the youths, the CDS became an integral aspect of community projects. This made the corps members to work closely with the host communities for the collective wellbeing of Nigerians. Over the past four decades, the NYSC Scheme has proved to be an effective facilitator for national development and cohesion through the apparatus of corps members' participation in various forms of community development service programmes and projects. This all-important contribution to the socio-economic development of Nigeria has not yet been comprehensively isolated and documented by scholars. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts a historical analysis of the impact of National Youth Service Corps Community Development Service in Nigeria since1973. The paper shows that the establishment of the scheme principally to build stringer understanding and national integration among the diverse constituent peoples/groups of Nigeria after the Nigeria Civil War (1967-1970) is a laudable decision in promoting Community Development Service. This is because the CDS has become an instrument for building national cohesion amongst the diverse constituent groups in Nigeria. Secondly, the CDS inherently brought the corps members closer to the members of the host communities, removes suspicion, help the corps members to easily become integrated in their areas of assignments and built trust among the diverse Nigerian communities.

Conceptual Clarification

For explanation and the need for a meaningful understanding of the subject matter, there is need to clarify several concepts that are relevant to the phenomenon under study.

National Youth Service Corps

National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is a national scheme established in 1973 by the military government of General Yakubu Gowon, principally to rebuild and reintegrate the constituent ethno-cultural/religious groups of a war-torn country through the youths, which equally has applied the CDS since its inception. Thus, the history of the scheme is traceable to the event that took

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

place in Nigeria towards the last half of 1960s.[4] The period of 1967-1970 was characterized by the Nigerian civil war.[5] At the end of the war, the General Yakubu Gowon administration came up with new policies that would promote post-conflict peace, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction (3Rs). Consequently, the vital need for national unity led to the birth of the NYSC idea. Thus, the NYSC Scheme came into being through Decree No. 24 of 22nd May, 1973. It states that the NYSC is being established in order to ensure proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and to promote national unity. More so, the establishment of the scheme was necessitated by problems such as poverty, socio-religious intolerance, shortage of skilled manpower and inadequate socio-economic infrastructural facilities.[6] The NYSC scheme is toexpose graduates to leadership roles, with particular reference to community development projects. Youthswere therefore recognized as central and assets a nation can have. They are the future leaders and the greatest investment for development.

It is important to note that, after 20 years of existence, the 1973 Decree was repealed and replaced with No. 15 of 16thJune, 1993, now referred to as the National Youth Service Corps Act, Cap. N85, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004. The Act is preserved by Section 315 (5) (a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), thereby, making the NYSC Act part and parcel of the constitution. Basically, the aim of the NYSC is to reinforce institutional efficiency and effectiveness as well as youth development in the country. It is accepted in several quarters that NYSC is a viable platform for the transitioning of youths into self-reliant adults and the improvement of general welfare and development. The NYSC programme has since inception facilitated steady and effective supply and distribution of skilled manpower, breaking of social and cultural barriers as well as the building of friendly bridges across ethnolinguistic boundaries. It has also assisted in the promotion of values, national unity and development, rekindled interest in neglected but vital areas of national development and promoted leadership qualities in the youths. Hence, the NYSC Scheme has four (4) cardinal programmes which are: Mobilization/Orientation, Primary Assignment, Community Development Service (CDS) and Winding-Up/Passing-Out Exercise. To this end, the focus of this paper is on the third programme, which is the CDS.

It is Interesting to note that at the onset of the NYSC in 1973, 2,346 graduates were mobilized. However, judging by the development of the Scheme, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of the graduates that are participating annually, of which the minimum requirement age for the youth under the scheme was thirty (30) years old. Thus, NYSC is capable of bringing out the best qualities in Nigerian youth and imparting in them the right attitude

[4]*NYSC, Community Development Service*. Lagos: NYSC Directorate, 1984. 6-9; Adegboyega, I. A. & David, A. F. "The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme in Nigeria, 1973-2012: Retrospective and Prospective Analysis" *Journal of Arts, Humanities and Diplomacy*2, no. 2 (2012):15-16.
[5]Wycliff, S. "A History of Igbo-Migrant Community in Katsina Metropolis, 1903–2011." M.A. (History) Dissertation, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2016. 100-104.
[6]Wycliff, S. "A Study of the Establishment and Growth of Private Schools in Katsina, 1980–2010." B.A. (History) Project, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2012. 110-120

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

and value for nation building that serve as catalyst to national development, sense of pride and fulfilment of its participating graduate youths. Thus, its presence is felt and noticed in all the seven hundred and seventy-four (774) Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the country, creating higher emphasis in the rural and grass root development in line with its objectives.

Community Development

There is no universally accepted definition of community development.Many scholars have made several attempts to define the concept. This is so because, the level of community development service varies from one country to another. Community development as a process in Nigeria began since the pre-colonial period. Community development process and practices therefore entails the inclusion and participation of different interest groups, stakeholders and actors including the people whose livelihood projects are geared at improving government and non-governmental bodies, funding organisations, project experts and executors.[7]According to the United Nations Economic and Social Council's report on Concept and Principles of Community Development, community development is "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems." It is a broad concept, applied to the practices of civic leaders, activists, involved citizens, and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, typically aiming to build stronger and more resilient local communities.[8] Furthermore, Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills they need to effect change within their communities.

These skills are often created through the formation of social groups working for a common agenda. It is important to also note that one of the basic guiding principles of community development, according to the report, is that, the activities undertaken have to correspond to the basic needs of the community which occupies the centre stage in the context of our study. To this end, community development can be seen as both a phenomenon dealing with the reorganization and reorientation of economic and social system, or as a continuous process of improving the quality of human lives in its entirety. This, by extension, incorporates; raising peoples' standard of living with particular reference to incomes, consumption and utility; providing a conducive atmosphere to enhance peoples' self-esteem through the introduction of socio-political and economic systems, to promote mutual respect for all and; to provide freedom of choice in terms of variables, varieties of goods and services.
One of the most important roles of community service is the fact that it promotes the spirit of philanthropy amongst people. This is no doubt one of the main aims of the NYSC programme. The hope is that, as soon as corps members pass out from the scheme, most of them imbibe the habit of community development, which they take as a guiding tradition throughout their lives.

[7]Akande, J. O. "Community Development in Nigeria: Historical Account and Lessons from the Defects of the Past. *Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development* 5, no. 1 (2010): 61-72; Smith, M. K. "What is Community Development." *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*. August 7, 2024. http://infed.org/mobi/what-is-community-development/
[8]United Nations, Economic and Social Council, Social Commission (Eleventh Session). Ekistics 4, no. 26 (1957): 92-96. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43613175

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Community development service also brings a lot of development into the lives of the beneficiaries. This may come in different modes. For instance, a community that is in a dire need of water supply will surely appreciate anyone who can provide it for them. This is because it can change their lives in many ways. Meanwhile, community development service always contributes to the development of not only a community, but a state and a nation by extension. Large number of philanthropists can transform a society in its entirety even without government involvement and this is the sole aim of CDS in the NYSC scheme. One can conveniently cite as many examples as possible about the way and manner corps members transform the lives of fellow Nigerians via the CDS. This development ranges from the building of schools, dispensaries, to the construction of culverts, among others. In many instances, communities hosting corps members are empowered with capital to run businesses. This no doubt, brought a lot of development.

Similarly, through community development services, the growing rate of animosity between Nigerians, particularly after the Civil War years are reduced to the lowest ebb. This is because; Corps members who come from different states of the federation positively influenced the lives of their host communities irrespective of their ethnicity, religions, gender or regions. Community development service equally promotes the culture of reciprocating goodness and generosity. A community that benefited from a particular development project, for example, would naturally be accommodative to its philanthropists. Through the NYSC CDS groups, many a relationship was built between the corps members and their host communities, many years after the one mandatory service year. In such instances, one finds it even difficult sometimes to understand the nature of such relationships, which seem to have transcended mere friendship to blood-like relations.

Therefore, the CDS is one of the four (4) Cardinal Programmes of NYSC in which corps members are expected to contribute to the development of their host communities throughout the period of national service. The CDS programmes have an impact on communities in the areas of education, health care delivery, agriculture, communication, infrastructure, technology, economic empowerment, poverty eradication, social services and above all national consciousness and socio-cultural regeneration.[9] In other words, the NYSC-CDS is a year-round affair through which corps members work with the local communities to promote self-reliance. They do this by systematically prospecting and executing development projects and programme that affects the socio-economic development of the host communities. To achieve this, each corps member is assigned compulsorily to a particular CDS group as his/her Group CDS. While a personal CDS project/programme is optional for interested corps members, group CDS is compulsory for all youth corps members with attendance once in a week and the remaining four days to be spent at the Place of Primary Assignment (PPA). The primary assignment is the attachment of

[9] ABC of Community Development Service. NYSC, NDHQ Abuja. October, 2014. 1-10.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

corps members to institutions or places where they are expected to work like members of staff of the organisation.[10]

Classification of NYSC-CDS

(a). Group CDS: This is the type of CDS activity whereby Corps Members are formed into groups for various purposes. Corps Members are expected to use one day in a week for this category of CDS and are not expected to attend duties in their Places of Primary Assignment on such days. Such days are dedicated to the execution of projects and programmes that will improve the living conditions of their host communities.

(b). Personal CDS: This is the type of CDS activity where individual Corps Members can execute projects/programmes in their host communities based on the community's felt needs. Corps Members are encouraged in addition to the group CDS to look out for areas where they could make an individual impact in the community. It could be construction projects like building toilets, bridges, classrooms, etc., or social/educational projects/programmes such as the establishment of libraries, extramural classes, charity work, vocational training for empowerment of unemployed youths, etc. Where a project/programme requires financial support, Corps Members are encouraged to source funds from other organisations after getting approval from the management of NYSC.

(c). Collaborative CDS: The scheme partners with National and Non-Governmental organizations and other establishments to implement development programmes. The Scheme signs MOU with the partners, clearly stating each partner's roles/responsibilities. Corps Members are usually involved as Volunteers in this programme. Collaborators in this type of CDS include Road Safety Group (Federal Road Safety Corps), Reproductive Health & HIV/AIDs Group, Anti-Corruption (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission & Independent Corrupt Practices and others related offenses Commission) Group, Service Delivery Group (Attitudinal Change, ReBranding), Sustainable Development Goals, Medical and Health Services Group (Red Cross, Breast Without Spot, Polio Plus, etc.), Drug-Free and Quality Control Group (National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency, National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control, Standards Organisation of Nigeria), etc. See Table 1 below for the various NYSC-CDS groups, their purposes and activities.

[10] Abdullahi, M., &Chikaji, A. I. "Issues in Community Development Service Scheme of Nigeria's National Youth Service Corps and Its Relevance to Community Development." *International Journal of Research in Science & Engineering* 2, no. 6 (2016): 218-224; Abdullahi, M., Cheri, L.,&Chikaji, A. I. "Analysis of the Implementation of Community Development Service Projects of National Youth Service Corps: Channels and Hindrances." *Ilorin Journal of Administration and Development, University of Ilorin* 2, no. 2 (2016): 1-13.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

Table 1: List of NYSC-CDS Groups in Nigeria

S/No.	CDS Groups	Purpose	Activities
1	Agro-Allied Group	(i). Support agro-allied activities in host communities (ii). To promote better food production and security.	(i) Demonstration farms/Extension Services. (ii). Establishment of Farmers Cooperative Societies. (iii). Advocacy. (iv). Teaching of new farming techniques. (v). Communities.
2	Anti-Corruption Group (EFCC & ICPC)	(i). To help in eradicating corruption through Campaign.	(i). Sensitization (ii). Creation of awareness in schools and organizations (iii). Establish Anti - Corruption Clubs in schools.
3	Charity Services and Gender Group	(i). To improve the living standard of the downtrodden (ii). Charity outreaches to the public.	(i). Mobilize funds and other resources for less privileged (ii). Visits of orphanages and prisons. (iii). Donation of materials to homes.
4	Corps Legal Aid Group	(i). Legal service to inmates and indigent persons. (ii). Public lecture and awareness on fundamental human rights. (iii). Free legal services to the less privileged and indigent prison inmates (Victims of denials and violation ofrights). (iv). Sensitization of the public on fundamental human rights.	(i). Advocacy. (ii). Visit to prisons (iii). Legal service to inmates and indigent persons. (iv). Public lecture and awareness on fundamental human rights.
5	Cultural	(i). Promoting arts	(i). Identifying

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

		and Culture (ii). Dissemination of vital socio-economic and political problems and prospects.	talents (ii). Entertainment (iii). Setting up of the schemes the at regroups
6	Drug Free and Quality Control Group (NDLEA, NAFDAC, SON)	(i). Eradication of fake drugs (ii). Create awareness of the danger of drug abuse.	(i). Establishment of drug free clubs in Schools (ii). Ensuring linkages with the host communities.
7	Disaster Management Group (NEMA)	(i). To create awareness on disaster management (ii). To disseminate information on how to manage disasters through Corps Emergency Vanguards.	(i). Public enlightenment on disaster management and control through the emergency Vanguards (ii). Disaster management (iii). Liaison with NEMA on how to assist during emergencies (iv). Formation of emergency vanguard club in schools.
8	Education Development Group (Mass Literacy, Adult Education, Extra Murals, ICT)	(i). Enhance the Education Standard of the host community (ii). Career guidance and counselling for students.	Campaign against Illiteracy • Organizing Extramural classes for adults. • Organizing of in school programmes
9	Editorial/Publicity Group	(i). Compliment the activities of the NYSC PRU in disseminating Information to the Community.	Making a presentation on mass media to enlighten people on socio-cultural education.
10	Environmental Protection and Sanitation Group (Eco Vanguard, NASREA)	(i). To promote. (ii). To create.	(i). Tree planting (ii). Sanitation (iii). Drainage Control (i). Erosion Control (ii). Reforestation. (iii). Landscaping
11	Medical and Health	(i). Promotion and	(i). Health outreach

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

	Services Group (Red Cross, Breast Without Spot, Polio Plus)	provision of Medical Services.	(ii). First Aid administration (iii). Establishment. (iv). Setting up of clinic for the NYSC Secretariat.
12	Reproductive Health & HIV/ AIDS Group	(i). To train and mentor Students. (ii). To mobilize and strengthen community-based responses on HIV/AIDS prevention.	(i). Sensitization
13	Road Safety Group	(i). To contribute to public safety on our roads.	(i). Sensitization and control of traffic. (ii). Rendering first aid to accident victims. (ii). Establishment of road safety clubs in schools.
14	SDGs	(i). To create awareness and actualize the goals of SDGs.	Advocacy and Mentoring of the host Community.
15	Service Delivery Group (Attitudina l Change, Re-Branding)	(i). Sensitization.	(i). Training (ii). Sensitization (iii). Group discussions
16	Sport Group	(i). Creates avenue for recreation and healthy rivalry among Corps Members and the community. (ii). Arousing the consciousness of living healthy and purposeful lifestyles through participation in one form of physical activity or the other. (iii). Identifying talents among Corps Members.	(i). Participation in Sports competitions (ii).Identifying and Training members of the Community (iii). Organizing Sports Competitions.

Source: ABC of Community Development Service. NYSC Community Development Service, and Special Project, 2016. 16.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

From the foregoing, it is clear that CDS, is no doubt a major component of the NYSC through which the corps members work in collaboration with local communities to promote self-reliance by executing developmental projects in all its manifestations, as well as programmes that would contribute to socio-economic and political development in Nigeria. In other words, the CDS however, is one of the most crucial contributions of the NYSC in an attempt to harness skills, creativity, and innovation of corps members. The programme obliges the corps members to identify the needs of their host communities and undertake different developmental projects, which is beneficial to their host communities.[11]To buttress this fact, Akume, Solomon, and Mohammed argue that:

> The CDS (Community Development Service) requires that corps members use their acquired skills to provide services such as education, healthcare delivery, rural infrastructural and community development. Agriculture, science and technology and enlightenment campaigns for the benefit of their host community…as such, ensuring the success of community development service imposes on the corps members to wear a spirit coated with dedication and enthusiasm irrespective of the challenges they might face in so far as they are not life-threatening.[12]

Akume, Solomon and Mohammed proposition can strongly stand simply because the NYSC scheme brings together students of all disciplines such as History, Medicine, Engineering, Economics, Accounting, Mathematics, ICT, Information Technology, among others. In this way, therefore, the scheme can easily muster the needed manpower in virtually all aspects of human life. Meanwhile, the training normally given to the corps members would surely compliment their expertise in various fields of human endeavour. It is for much the same reason that many states of the Nigerian federation rely heavily on the expertise of the corps members so as to run their affairs cap in hand.

Impact of NYSC-CDS on Nigerian Communities

From the background discussion, this section the impact of the NYSC-CDS on Nigerian communities. The CDS executed by corps members has resulted in socio-economic development in various communities through the establishment of schools, public toilets, building libraries, sensitisations, campaigns and public enlightenment carried out in many communities on social problems such as corruption, drug abuse, especially amongst youths, road safety, medical care, entrepreneurial skills, among other important issues. To say that NYSC has contributed immensely to the development of the various Nigerian communities is no doubt an understatement. This is because the corps

[11]NYSC, Decree and Amendments. No. 28 Vol. 60, May 23rd, 1973. 3-5, Part A;NYSC, A Compendium of the National Youth Service Corps Scheme: Ten Years of Service to the Nation. Lagos: NYSC Directorate, 1983. 9-11.

[12]Akume, A.T., Solomon, M. and Mohammed, O. A. "Conflict, the NYSC Programme and the Question of Policy Relevance in Present Day Nigeria: An Assessment." *50 Years of Nigeria's Nationhood: Issues and Challenges for Sustainable Development*, edited byD.A. Abdurrahman, I. S. Ogundiya, T. Garba, and I. M. Dankani. 106-112. Ibadan: Crown F. Publishers, 2012.

members and the NYSC scheme to the improvement of the human condition in Nigeria.[13]In fact, in its the effort to improve the human resource capacity of the nation, the NYSC in its 2012Batch 'B' Orientation Course successfully y trained 45,000 corps members in various skill areas. 5,404 specialized in agro-allied skills and 5, 509 in food processing and preservation, 8,035 in culture and tourism related skills and 5,062 in cosmetology7. ICT had 8, 119, 2,057 acquired skills in construction, 2,837 in beautification and 2, 425 in education.[14] It is worthy of note that the community development projects undertaken by the Corps members can be best understood in two ways, namely; infrastructural projects and human development projects. The infrastructural projects include projects like the construction of classrooms, bridges, roads, bus stops, status, and symbols among others. In a border term, the infrastructural projects involve the impactful activities of the Corps members based on community felt needs. It involves the identification and solving of critical areas of infrastructural deficit of the host communities. An example of these areas could be the construction of bridges, classrooms, the building of toilets, incinerators, provision of games facilities in schools, equipping libraries with books, and vocational training for empowerment among others. To execute this project, it is expected that the Corps members will solicit funds from philanthropies, politicians, donor agencies, private organizations in and outside of the community, but on no account should a Corps member write a letter to any of the above-stated organizations without passing through the State Coordinator.

In terms of the human development projects, it includes donations to the less-privileged, organisation of extra-mural classes, adult literacy campaigns, skill acquisition/ vocational training, sports development, and immunization and sensitization campaigns, which improved the way of life and living standards of the communities. Thus, development projects, Corps members volunteer in public awareness and sensitizations campaigns, educating the public on various aspect of community development like the SDGs campaign, UNICEF, WHO, NDLEA, NAFDAC, FRSC, USAID, UNESCO, EFCC/ICPC, WOTCLEF, LEGAL AID, SERVICOM, SON among many others. From the recent studies available, Corps members executed more human development projects than infrastructural projects.[15] This is expected because of the huge amount of capital and the bureaucracy involved in executing infrastructural projects.

It is worthy of note that existence of faith-based organisation like The Nigeria Christian Corpers' Fellowship (NCCF) and Muslim Corpers Association of Nigeria (MCAN)have been of immense importance in the development of various communities. They are associations of serving corps members of Christian and Muslim faiths respectively. These bodies visit accident victims at hospitals and distribute relief materials, engage in environmental cleanliness like community sanitation, grave yard visitations, organise extramural classes,

[13]Ademowo, Y. "NYSC: Exploring the Diversity in the Unity of Nigeria." August 9, 2010. www.nigerian.newspaper.com/national-youth-service-corps.htm.
[14]Uomwen, D. "Tackling NYSC's Security Challenge." Access August 8, 2012. http://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2012/10/tackling-nysc-security-challenge/
[15]National Youth Service Corp Year Book, 2018. Edition, 46. 46-47; Enegwea, G., &Umoden, G. *NYSC: Twenty Years of National Service*. Lagos: Gabumo Publishing Company Ltd., 1993. 59.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

etc. as part of their routine community development services.[16]These religious NYSC groups have been of immense assistance in sponsorship of community development projects.[17]

Interestingly to note that in its effort to appreciate the impact of the Corp members in CDS programme and projects, as well as to encourage corps members to contribute to the overall national development, the Federal Government of Nigeria initiate the President's NYSC National Honours Awards in 1974 primarily to accord recognition and reward winners those Corp members that conceive and initiate a personal community development project that tangibly benefit his host community.[18]To buttress this fact, the former Military Head of State (1985-1993), General Ibrahim Babangida (IBB), on the occasion of the President's NYSC Honours Award Ceremony, December 8, 1989 noted that

> "Honours, awards and ceremonies of this nature have become part of our national development process. This administration recognises the role of incentives as they serve as rewards for selfless and patriotic service. But beyond that, awards and ceremonies of this nature should be seen as for a to carve role models and to expose committed people for other citizens to emulate."[19]

At the December 1992 award ceremony, there were 20 winners from 15 states, from a total of 93 nominees drawn from all over the country. By December 1992, about 378 ex-corps members had received the President's NYSC Honours Award since its inception in 1974. When this ceremony was first held in 1974 only ten corps members received the award. Two Years later, in 1976, the award was categorised into two and rechristened "Chairman's National Award" and Chairman's State Honours Award". In 1976 the number of states in Nigeria increased from 12 to 19. That year witnessed 22 corps members being decorated, with the Head of state or president usually presiding over the event. Also, since 1984, the award has changed from plaque to medal presentation. In 1988, president Babangida on the occasion of that year's Honours Award held at Abuja, called for the extension of the Annual Award to the Local Government Level". It was for this reason, among others, that the scheme renewed its efforts to monitor corps members, achievement and contributions in the rural areas (host communities).[20]

In 2010, there were 51 recipients and 52 of such awards in 2011. The beneficiaries (2011) were drawn from 2009 Batch 'C'/2010 Batches 'A' and 'B' service years. While in 2015, in a combined Award of 2012, 2013 and 2014, 164 ex-Corps members who were painstakingly selected out of over 600, 000 Corps

[16]Muslim Corpers Association of Nigeria (MCAN)Report, 2015. 1-5.
[17]MCAN, 2015. 1-5
[18]"168 Recipients of President's NYSC Honours Award Get Automatic Employment." *P.M News Nigeria*. April, 2024. https://pmnewsnigeria.com/2019/04/26/168-recipients-of-the-presidents-nysc-honours-award-get-automatic-employment/
[19]168 Recipients of President's NYSC Honours Award Get Automatic Employment.
[20] NYSC National Honours Awards, 2024. 1-2; NYSC National Honours Awards, 2024. https://nysckadu.tripod.com/honours.htm

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

Members conferred with the Award.[21]Thus, in the combined 2015, 2016 and 2017 President's NYSC honours awards ceremony in 26th April, 2019, 168 set of corps members were the recipients, and equally to be employed immediately into the Federal Civil Service, with also automatic scholarships for the awardees to undertake postgraduate studies of their choice.[22]

Furthermore, on the 11thFebruary, 2021, one hundred and ten (110)corps members of the 2018/2019 were recipients of theaward whose names were forwarded across the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).[23]Similarly, President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023) on May 18, 2023 awarded 52 ex-corps members who distinguished themselves during the NYSC-CDS programme and projects. More so, the President also granted the awardees automatic employment in the Federal Civil Service and scholarships to pursue their education up to the doctorate degree level in any university of their choice within the country.[24]

The management of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has revealed that no fewer than 1426 ex-corps members have benefitted from the President's NYSC Honours Award since its commencement in 1974.[25] To this end, all these shows that the President's Honours Awards is the highest category of recognition given to corps members who have distinguished themselves during the one-year national service impacting of Nigerian communities through the CDS.

Challenges of NYSC-CDS

The NYSC-CDS has been faced with numerous challenges. Implementationof the CDS project is hindered by several factors including but not limited to **inadequate encouragement and motivation of corps members**. For example, in the year 2012, Corp Member Oyediran Igbosanmi Israel, in an interview, was reported to have suffered negative statements by people when he showed interest in building a Primary Healthcare Centre at a community in Buruku LGA of Benue state. Although he later executed the project to the last, he suffered setbacks from people with discouraging comments like "such projects are for government", "you are wasting your time", "who will give you such amount". Corps members are not encouraged to embark on CDS projects as they spend a lot of time and energy trying to carry out majorly their primary

[21]"News, Press Conference, 2018. *Napnha Press Release*. February 13, 2024. https://pnha123817896.wordpress.com/category/news/
[22]News, Press Conference
[23]*Annual Abstract of Statistics*. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012. http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/ ; Jannamike, L. "110 deserving corps members to bag presidential award – NYSC". *Vanguard*, 2021. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/02/110-deserving-corps-members-to-bag-presidential-award-nysc/
[24]Exclusive: Full List of 2023 Presidential Honours Award Winners". 2023. May 21. Green *White Green (GWG) News*. https://gwg.ng/2023/05/21/full-list-of-2023-presidential-honours-award-winners/
[25]Ugwu, R. "Beneficiaries of NYSC President Honours Award hit 1426". *The Sun*. March 12, 2024.https://thesun.ng/beneficiaries-of-nysc-president-honours-award-hit-1426/

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

assignment and care for their selves. Even when projects are of interest to Corps members, only NYSC officials are seen encouraging it.[26]

The second challenge is associated with the bureaucratic processes involved in drafting a proposal, determining community's need, seeking for sponsorship, getting approvals, managing resources, etc. discourages corps members from partaking in CDS activities because these procedures consume a lot of time, energy and monetary resources before they can be accomplished. Although, some CDS projects are never forgotten by host communities, corps members are not well appreciated. Reward is not the essence of carrying out a CDS project, but the benefit of being commended for engaging in community development cannot be emphasised. Rewards such as recommendation letters will go a long way in making a corps member want to continue to carry out community development projects even after the scheme. Also, randomly selecting CDS Groups for Corps members, without letting them pick their areas of interest or specialization leads many to show lackadaisical attitude towards the programme.[27]

The third challenge is the trend of insecurity battling the country since 2007. For example, the Boko-Haram insurgency and terrorism in places like Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states,[28] and then banditry and kidnapping in Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Benue as well as number of reported skirmishes and ethno-religious conflicts and post-election violence in some parts of Nigeria such as Wukari (Taraba State), Ibbi (Taraba State), and Southern Kaduna (Kaduna State), to mention a few, had all displaced a lot of Nigerians, especially in the Northeastern and Northwestern part of the country coupled with thousands of people killed, wounded, or displaced. Coupled with destruction of properties worth billions of Naira.[29] All these posed serious security threat to peaceful coexistence of Nigerian communities which supposed to create the

[26]Abdullahi, Cheri, &Chikaji, "Analysis of the Implementation of Community Development Service Projects of National Youth Service Corps: Channels and Hindrances." 1-13.
[27]National Youth Service Corps/Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission CDS Group, 2016. Administrative report of NYSC/ICPC Rivers State 2015 Batch 'A' administration. Port Harcourt, Nigeria: NYSC/ICPC, 2015. 8-9; National Youth Service Corps/Road Safety Club CDS Group (2016). Administrative report of NYSC/RSC Kwara 2015 Batch 'A' administration. Ilorin, Nigeria: NYSC/RSC, 2015. 7-12.
[28]Wycliff, S. "Terrorism and Insurgency: An Assessment of the Impacts of Boko Haram on Peace and Development in North-Eastern Nigeria, 2005–2015AD." In *Insecurity and Economy of Northern Nigeria in the 21st Century and Beyond. A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Ahmed Modibbo Mohammed*, edited by Mejida, M. 301-325. Abuja: Binani Printing Press Ltd, 2021; Wycliff, S. and Wajiga, A. B. "Women and Girls Insurgent in the Boko Haram Militancy Camp in Nigeria's North-East, 2009–2015." In *Ungoverned Spaces, Rural Banditry and Insecurity in Contemporary Nigeria*, 1999–2020, edited by Tor, A., Shehu, S and Danmaraya, I. 88-112. Kaduna: Department of History, Kaduna State University, 2021.
[29]Attah, B. "Join the Caravan: The Ideology of Political Authority in Islam from IbnTaymiyya to Boko Haram in North-Eastern Nigeria." *Perspectives in Terrorism* 7, no. 3, (2013): 30-43; Abba, A. *The Disappointing Hour: A Review of My Transition Hour by Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan*. Zaria: Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, 2019. 11-16; Aondoawase, S. J. *Combating Terrorism in the Contemporary Society*. Lagos: SOHA Production Ltd. 2015.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

conducive atmosphere for the full implementation of NYSC-CDS programme and projects in the rural and urban areas of the country.

The **fourth** challenge was the **advent of Covid-19 in the world in the year 2019** and then in early 2020 in Nigeria.[30] It spread posed serious setback to NYSC-CDSactivities. This is because, the deadly nature of the virus particularly in terms of rapid spread made it mandatory for governments world-wide to adopt the famous policy of lockdown and social distancing. To ensure a quick response to tackling the virus even after locking their countries, governments also ordered for the closure of all gathering including schools, public and private offices, markets, sport complexes, clubs, to mention, but just a few. A such this problem has affected the smooth-running of the NYSC scheme, let alone its CDS programme as the central focus of this paper. Besides, during this global pandemic all programmes demanding direct physical contact like the NYSC were equally put on hold temporarily. In fact, throughout the period of the lockdown, corps members were asked to stay at home and observe all the measures for combating the Corona Virus such social distancing, washing of hands with soap and sanitizers, wearing of face masks, among the most important strategies. The implication was that all important activities imbued in the NYSC scheme such as PPA (working at their Place of Primary Assignment), monthly clearance, and Community Development Service (CDS) were put on hold until the situation improved. Thus, this is not only the biggest challenge the NYSC has faced, but also the most trying period of its history with a lot of lessons to learn, especially that geared towards the promotion of and development of the programme in the future. Some of the challenges posed by the Corona Virus also brought out to the government the need to reinvest in some aspects of the NYSC such as camp facilities, equipment, as well as the re-evaluation of the scheme.

Conclusion

This paper attempted a historical analysis of the impact of NYSC-CDS on Nigerian communities since 1973.It has been in the vanguard of the nation's effort to level the imbalance in the rural-urban development through the various community development programmes executed by the corps members. It argued that community development service is an old African tradition mainly to promote the spirit of self-development and philanthropy. The paper also threw light into the major roles of NYSC-CDS whose roles had indeed touched the heart of the Nigerian society in areas of health and hygiene, education and mass literacy, charity, road safety, war against corruption, among other vital contribution to humanity. The individual CDS project carried out by corps members goes deeper in provoking this unity because it is a project in the heart of the community, but identified and worked jointly till completion, which gave both a course to smile at the end. The paper concludes that though the NYSC-CDS has played important roles in the socio-economic and political development of the Nigerian state, it has also been experiencing several challenges, among which are inadequate sensitisation of the public on NYSC-

[30] Galal, S. "Coronavirus deaths in Africa as of August 8, 2021. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1170463/coronavirus-cases-in-africa/

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me

ISSN 2787-0308 (ONLINE)

CDS operation/functions, lack of adequate funds for CDS projects or programmes, as well as poor funding of the scheme.

© humanusdiscourse@gmail.com , http://humanusdiscourse.website2.me