

**PAPER TITLE:**

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP AND NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF TOWN PLANNERS (NITP)

By TPL. OLUTOYIN AYINDE

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### **1.0 Introduction**

Communities are groups of individuals linked by issues, interactions, geography or a sense of identity. They include, but are not limited to: Residents, community associations, religious groups, ethnic groups, etc. while

A professional body is usually a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to the advancement of the knowledge and practice of professions through developing, supporting, regulating and promoting professional standards for technical and ethical competence.

All organization have a two point agenda to improve qualitative (the management of people and processes) and quantitatively (the impact on society). The second is as important as the first and stakeholders of every organization are increasingly taking an interest in "the other circle" – the activities of the organization and how these are impacting the environment and society. Community relation is an ethical ideology or theory that an entity be it an organization or individual, has an obligation to act to benefit society at large. Community relation is a duty every individual or organization has to perform so as to maintain a balance between the economy and the ecosystem. The phrase "community relations," simply describes an organization's interactions with the community in which it is situated. The use of this phrase by businesses, the media, and organizations however, almost always signifies something more than ordinary relationships and includes voluntary

actions that either are (or can be interpreted as) done just for the good of the community. This can be viewed from two perspective:

- 1) As an organization's unforced contributions to the community.
- 2) A branch of public relations—a form of communications.

Like public relations, community relations is something an organization has whether this fact is recognized or not. Unlike public relations, community relations is usually limited to the local area. Business organizations give attention to their community relations for good reason. However, an organization impact is dependent on the relationship it has built overtime with the public. Without sufficient attention to such matter, it can be concluded that professional bodies will struggle to maintain relevance and credibility.



Fig.1: Typical Structure of a professional Body

In Nigeria there are over 90 professional bodies in the country which between them represent over 4 million professionals. Professional bodies are not businesses, yet they must adopt a more 'business-minded' approach to defining and implementing strategies if they are to continue to fulfil their economic and societal roles. And Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP) is one of the recognized professional bodies that has been in existence since September 5<sup>th</sup> 1966. From 30 pioneer members, the profession has grown to over 3,000 made up of 142 Fellows, 1814 Full members and over 325 Graduate members.

## 2.0 Nigeria Institute of Town Planners (NITP)

NITP is Nigeria's leading planning body for spatial, sustainable, integrative and inclusive planning. NITP exists to advance the science and art of planning for the

benefit of the public. As a professional body representing the spatial planning in the built environment in Nigeria, not much can be said to have been done to greatly impact the community through her programmes and activities in order to harmonize the relationship for a better coexistence. Therefore, if the Institute is to regain the public confidence, it must take a giant stride in its community relation programmes.

### **3.0 Why Professional Bodies engage in Community Relations:**

#### **The benefit(s) for organizations**

##### **1. Enhanced corporate image**

Community relation is increasingly used by customers, stakeholders, employees and other community groups to measure performance. An organization that can demonstrate strong values and a commitment to the community will enjoy an improved reputation and one that differentiates it from its counterparts, potentially increasing public loyalty and awareness.

#### **The benefits for communities**

There are many ways communities benefit from community relations including:

##### **1. Access to jobs and livelihood development**

Providing employment and building capacity to give people the skills, ability and confidence to earn a living and take a leading role in developing their communities is an essential element of community relation. It helps address local unemployment, a major contributing factor to child poverty, ill health, crime and homelessness, and promotes self-reliance. As part of professional bodies' community relation programmes, they often support projects/development that promote productivity within local communities.

##### **2. Environmental improvements**

Many community relations initiatives focus on enhancing the local environment, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors where business depends on the quality of the surroundings. Whether the focus of activities is environmental education, clean-ups, wildlife or water conservation, recycling or energy efficiency, the result for communities should be an improved quality of life and more efficient use of resources.

### **3. Health and education improvements**

In areas where diseases, such as malaria or HIV/AIDS, are rife, community relation programmes will often focus on health issues, whether it is raising health awareness among community dwellers or supporting medical care. Many community programmes also focus on improving educational opportunities for local people, from building schools to offering scholarships.

### **4. Infrastructure and facilities development**

Professional bodies are to help facilitate the development of new infrastructures within their local community either through financing or intellectual property. Examples include roads or public utilities, creating self-help groups to build new and repair existing water sources, train mechanics to sustain and manage water and sanitation facilities, and construct child-friendly toilets, etc.

The benefits of community relations by professional bodies are not limited to the above itemized. However, the main focus of each professional body are always be reflected in the benefit it creates.

#### **4.0 Programmes Adoptable by Professional Bodies for the Community Relationship**

- ❖ Regional Growth Programmes.
- ❖ Partnership with International/Renowned Bodies to provide Physical/Social Infrastructure. (CSR)
- ❖ Enlightenment/Exchange Programmes.
- ❖ Town Hall Meetings to address Community Challenges.
- ❖ Support Programmes for affected Communities/Vulnerable.
- ❖ Advocacy.

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