

Rural development in Nigeria: problems and prospects for sustainable development

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ABSTRACT

The paper highlights the contribution of organization and government in rural development in Nigeria, with all effort put in the development of rural area in Nigeria, rural area are still like nothing has ever be done in that direction. This paper points out ways of good measures to be taken in order to improve the living standard of rural dwellers, after the failure of previous administrations in the development of rural areas in Nigeria due to poor and no coordinated governance. Recommendations were also forwarded; if strictly adhere to may lead to drastic improvement in the rural development in Nigeria.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Development is a necessary aspect of societies, indeed any society without development could be said to be static. Hence all societies are dynamic. Development as a term has been defined by many writers with different views: -

Ablu (1982) viewed development as synonymous with economic growth measured in aggregate terms. Abubakar, (1981) sees development as qualitative improvement in all societies and in all groups of individuals within societies. He asserts that all men must surely have enough goods in order to be men and to develop themselves.

As defined by forest, (1981) development is creating the condition for the realization of human personality. He noted that development has to be marked with reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequality a high level of nutrition, high health standard, low infant mortality rate etc.

From above definitions of development, it can be deduced that development is virtually changing the life of an individual, group of people or community in terms of social amenities, such as good health, good road, adequate and clean water, education etc.

Due to the lack of a well articulated programme a rural development, there has been much variation in the administration and performance of rural development programme in Nigeria. Efforts made by successive Nigerian governments have been at its worse more of propaganda. Indeed it is safe to say that Nigeria has no rural development programme until 1976 when development for rural development was created. Before this time the governments idea of ploughing back some revenue to the rural sector was through: large sales plantation of cocoa, rubber, oil palm, subsidy approach which allows the public sector to provide infrastructure which indeed transport irrigation facilities etc and that of agrarian called reform in a package called “Integrated Rural Development” (IRD) (Agwunobi, 1993). As he further stressed, great damage was inflicted by financial agencies that persuaded Nigeria into multi-sectorial development programme under the pretence of integrated rural development programme (IRDP) even though Nigeria has often do not have a well defined rural development strategy.

Rural development has not been centrally guided; instead of institutionalizing rural development ministry the federal government has rationed the development programmes on several ministries and departments at both federal and state levels. The crucial role of local government system as a link between government and the rural people remains unrealizable. These lapses have prompted a continued search for a new strategy for rural development in Nigeria (Okeh, 2010).

Evaluation of rural development in Nigeria is incomplete without the contribution of international organizations such as food and agriculture organization (FAO) as the leading agency, international labour organization (ILO) United Nation Education, Social and Cultural organization (UNESCO), United Nations (UN) World health Organization (WHO) and World Bank. These organizations have enhanced Nigeria rural

development through their technical expertise in the field of education, extension and training which have continued to strengthen the technical, physical and environmental bases to rural development in Nigeria. Specifically, FAO and World Bank have been the main sponsors and promoters of agricultural development formulation or irrigation development programme, River basin and other developmental projects. FAO in collaboration with UNESCO and United Nations Development programme (UNDP) have disseminated information and knowledge about soil erosion and method of controlling it, ILO and UNESCO have been in the area of training of the grass root level extension workers and general education. World Health Organization (WHO) has been active in the area of prorated of primary health care and designing special programme for the delivery of such services.

Generally speaking, it will be more appropriate to say that these international organizations have not left the scene of rural development in Nigeria and that much of the country's achievements have their attributes to these organizations. Many of the programmes have enjoyed limited environment. In some cases have succeed in not only increasing farm input but also promoted the welfare of farmers and encourage the community spirit. However, the country's continued reliance on these organizations is a complete deviation of the policy of self reliance. The regular flow of money as loan from the World Bank into Nigeria's rural populace became a means of enriching few individuals. There unlimited involvements have displaced most of the indigenous experts due to the inflow of expatriates. The local needs of Nigerians are no more considered; corruption and mismanagement of project and funds became the order of the day. River Basin Development Projects, Fadama I, Fadama II and the recently introduction of Fadama III and similar others are typical examples of such failed projects (Yang, & An, 2002).

Though serious attempts have been made in the recent past by subsequent governments of Nigeria, but unfortunately, there have not been much dramatic changes. The establishment of the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was one of the boldest attempts towards not only centralizing rural development institution but standardizing and updating the level of rural communities in general. Thus one's comment for no should be with absolute reservation for the fear of the trial and error. Indeed, should the strategy of concreting the Directorate of Food and Rural Infrastructure is built and corrugated with strong hopes, the directorate cold have remain the laboratory, the answer and the parent agency of rural development in Nigeria (Ebon, 1995).

Measures of Acceleration and Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria

To accelerate and sustain rural development in Nigeria, the following measures should be given urgent consideration.

Increasing State and People's Participation

Participation which has become an article of faith a fundamental principle for any successful project or programme and the single most important key to improving the livelihoods of the word "poor" has not been highlighted and encouraged at a high level. It has been a fiction paper participation rather than functional participation in rural development programme. Participation implies the involvement of a broad spectrum of the community in all phases in rural development programme. Participation implies the involvement of a broad spectrum of the community in all phases of developmental activities from project selection and design through to execution and ex-post evaluation participation involves improvement of the poor so that they may exert their own influence independently of government direction on decision making and related activities of development projects (Hall & Midley, 1988). The strategies should therefore be on development by the people rather than by elites.

Increasing the level of beneficiary involvement in the planning and execution of official projects are deemed to failure almost from the start. It has been argued that authentic participation is largely incompatible with state guidance except on small scale and locally based schemes projecting the idea of state guidance may be to throw out the baby with the bath water (Essenjo, 1990). Apart from the technical assistance, the government must make resources available to local organization through revenue sharing as local grant arrangements.

Encouraging Community Organization

Voluntary community organizations are important in the harnessing of local initiative for rural development. Experience has shown, however that many of these tend to focus on a narrow range of project such as health centers, roads, water, markets, schools etc.

The commendable steps taken by DFRRI to encourage organization for rural development which include training of officers of these associations on programme and project planning should be maintained. Essenjo, (1990) opined that this will enable them expand such range of projects to include those that have direct bearing to the life of rural people. DFRRI's proposals along these lines should be implemented with urgency.

Mobilizing the Women Group

Amain, (1998) stressed that to reach all the people one has to reach the women. Once you have reached the women, you have reached the children, you have reached the family, and you have reached the nation. You have reached the nation in home, in the school, in the university, in the city, in the village, on the farm, at local government level, at the rural community level in hid highly intellectual state in his low state of illiteracy and ignorance. You have to meet the people of the nation on their own ground. Once they understand they will follow.

Education for women should be both formal and non formal. It should be not only aim to enlighten the women but it should also seek to liberate them from the yoke of superstition, ignorance, inferiority complex, indifference or any factor which makes them think they are equipped with a lesser degree of competence than their male counterparts. Male dominance ideology used to protect male claims has been identified as the major barrier to full mobilization of the rural women.

Williams (1998) said there is no real freedom one can so long as women are handicapped by men's legal privilege. The societal restrictions and religious belief which have rendered the female as second class citizens and more spectators in rural development should be combated. Women in purdah would be mobilized thorough their village heads and religious leaders so that they could engage in productive and economic activities. However, the desire to work out their problems themselves which was considered as blasphemy has been broken partially through women organizations. For example, National Council of Women Societies is unique place to coordinate women activities. Financial arrangement should be made to promote the work of the council.

Better life for rural women of late Hajjiya Maryam babangida is yet another aggressive move to situate women better in the country. Women Cooperate Societies such as Women in Agriculture, and many others should further be encouraged for the good and general progress of the nation.

Manpower Development

To accelerate and sustain rural development, agencies involved should recruit professional staff; develop the workers by providing training facilities to update their knowledge and skills. Without the adequate staff strength and necessary components, policy objectives cannot be achieved.

In Nigeria many of the techniques and programme are of course the initiative of developed countries. These programmes can be effectively carried out only when trained teams of workers are out into action. As observed the resources are not being utilized properly because people in the villages are ignorant about many scientific innovations. Nigeria should establish more institutions where rural development will be offered as a course of study at degree or higher national diploma level. India for instance, has more than (13) higher institutions of university standard that offer rural development programme (Rank, 2010).

Shehu, (2011) stressed that village extension workers should be trained in the method of extension education. To be trained in extension for rural development means, first to understand what is meant by extension, third, to know what can be expected from the correct use of extension, forth to know how to apply extension methods and finally to know how to evaluate the effectiveness of the extension method used. According to Solomon, & Adeyemi (2005)the village extension workers who should be from the immediate community should be given training in the field of agriculture, health, sanitation, principles of rural development functional literacy etc as these are the "first aid" assistance to village groups. The implementation of rural development programme is technical and this should be recognized. Therefore, the availability of trained and dedicated staff is a pre-requisite for the successful implementation of rural development programme.

Establishment of "Parent" Rural Development Directorate

Okeh, (2010) suggested that beside the trial and error which rural development drive is based there are also administrative and structural bottle necks that have neutralize most efforts made towards executing rural development plans in Nigeria. Rural development has not been centrally guided. Instead of institutionalizing rural development ministry the federal government has rationed the development programme meant for rural communities on many industrial. The rationing of various aspects of the rural development programme at the same time is without a body (Parent agency) to oversee and coordinate various sectors and their porogrammes. No doubt the success or rural development programme lies in building the structural and institutional bodies that will provide the necessary linkage of different planning and action levels (Ajayi, 1996).

Essenjoy, (1991) pointed out that today, one hears that rural development is under the ministry of agriculture in a particular state, while in another state is under the ministry social development. Tomorrow in the same state the programme is shifted to ministry of rural development youth and sports. This continuous

flexibility of this sector in the country has manifested no guarantee on rural development in Nigeria in the nearest future. This makes it more of trial – and – error after more than 50 years of independence.

The present agency would ameliorate the duplication of duties and functions of the various ministries assigned to rural development. Most people argue that ministry of agriculture international fund for agriculture development, Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) and even ministry of works perform the same functions. The open ministerial clash between ministry of information and national orientation agency is another clear duplication of role and duties in Nigeria government (Njoku, 2000).

According to Obinne & Nnamah, (1999) the major problem of International Fund of Agriculture Development (IFAD) and DFRRI is that they don't recruit or employ their own staff directly, rather rely on staff seconded from other government ministries and department. One would say that the components of IFAD and DFRRI staff are weak to put the professional touch to the test of rural development as greater number of their staff is weak and reluctant staff of other ministries. No ministries gives out its best staff on secondment rather the weak and redundant. The organizations at local level are rootless and need to be recognized and equipped with professional staff. The agencies are also not well funded for the uphill task of the parent agency. The yearly fund allocation seems to be merely paper allocation rather than in practice with lots of misappropriate (Shehu, 2011).

Effective Community Banking System

As Madukwe & Anyanwu, (2000) highlighted the persistent failure of government to live up to the claims of soap-box rhetoric has inevitably generated a widespread feeling of frustration and political apathy among the rural populace. The formation and registration of self help groups have equally not been popular either in most of the rural communities.

The community bank will no doubt cover wider aspects of rural development activities if not for the Central Bank of Nigeria policy on Micro Finance Banks.

Community Banks should be established in all the local government of the federation and should have a suitable frame network operation. The staff of the Banks should be exposed to special training in rural development. This will enable them assess effectively the visibility of development projects by recognizing factors not traditionally considered by leveling or commercial banks (UNO, 2004).

Community organization, self help groups and other social clubs should be directed to open and operate current accounts with the community banks to enable them obtain loans for developmental projects.

Promoting Viable Cooperatives

Cooperatives have been described as a method of working together according to laid down principles which those taking part agree to observe (Ladele, 1991). As Umaru, & Tyem, (1995) explains it cooperative was conceived as the answer to the injustice of capitalism, and was developed as its antidote. Poorer men saw in it a price economic advantage, a new incentive to efficiency and the utopian socialites a method of developing a completely new society (Yang, & An, 2002). A successful cooperative offers each member and general public and opportunity to maximize their economic wellbeing (Yang, & An, 1983).

Zinnah, (1997) believes that the Nigeria cooperative movement suffers from excessive central control and bureaucracy and lacks financial independence. Similarly, Yang, & An, (2002) and Ladele (1991) report that with government guaranteed bank overdrafts, Nigeria cooperatives depend on management by government officials and the authority of local government, community leaders, and have often been used as channels for state ruling party political patronage and recruitment. Yang, & An, (2002) regrets that cooperatives policy in Northern Nigeria effectively keeps rural development under government control. He further observes that the Nigeria cooperative movement has failed to provide any means of expression for ordinary members.

The foregoing references to some of the findings on the performance of the Nigeria cooperative movement forcefully shows that cooperative in Nigeria have not been vehicles for democratic participation of the ordinary citizens in rural production. The above lofty objectives of government cooperative policy will remain a mirage unless government recognizes the strict adherences to the internationally attained principles of the cooperative movement only in this way can cooperatives become a veritable vehicle for accelerating and sustaining rural development in Nigeria.

Establishment of Community Viewing Centers

Famoniyo, (1980) suggests establishing viewing centers and increased local content of television programmes that have direct bearing on the life of rural communities will greatly assist in mobilizing the support of rural audiences in developmental projects. The trained village level workers could operate the audio – visual aid system. To be more useful, meaningful, the village level work should be able to translate and interpret most of the programmes into local languages in a large viewing centers built by government.

Rural Radio Broadcasting Cooperation (RRBC) should also be considered as a complementing strategy. This system will broadcast largely for the benefit of rural dwellers. The rural information officer's corps could be recruited to facilitate the basic information needs of the rural people. Community based newspapers should be encouraged and more space should be given to local news. This will improve the literacy level of the ruralites. Mobile cinema, radio and other audio-visual facilities should be exploited to the full scale. This will no doubt increase the rural recreation and relaxation enters (Essenior, 1991).

The Use of Direct Labour As Opposed To Contractors

According to Aman, (1998) the involvement of business class, elites and politicians in decision making, regarding project implementation makes the idea of award of contract or rural development projects has become the order of the day. Local people and their labour should be used with their resources. The matching grants given to assist local communities should not be diverted to self ship contractors. Rather it should be used to buy the materials required, while the bulk of the labour force should be the rural people themselves. Greater numbers of the abandon projects are projects awarded to contractors who have no concern with such projects and the rural communities. The overall cost of the project will be reduced if the local and direct labour is used, while the safety of the project is guaranteed with technical advice and supervision to prevent mass waste of resources.

Rural Development Centres (RDC)

Nigeria is well known for its thousand villages scattered and neglected for decades. The scanty success made in rural development calls for the introduction of Rural Development Center (RDC) in every local government area of the federation to facilitate and built from the bottom. As noted, the initiative of the rural people has to a great extent not encouraging. What is needed is the awakening of the ruralites for social services.

Conclusion

The paper attempts to point out the problem rural development policy is facing in Nigeria. The involvement foreign organizations in the rural development, the mismanagement of funds meant for the rural development and the neglect the rural countries in Nigeria face for decades.

Recommendations

To have reasonable rural development the following recommendations are fostered -

1. The so-called state and local government joint account should be stopped and give local government autonomy and full responsibility for their own share of federal fund allocation.
 2. International agencies who want to invest in projects that have direct bearing on the life of rural people should have direct access to those communities.
 3. Self help project should be encouraged among the rural communities by both the federal and state government.
 4. Though joint account between state and local government should be discouraged, but the state government must make it mandatory upon itself to monitor the spending of the local governments.
 5. Only projects that have direct bearing onto the life of rural communities should be the priority.
1. Youth and women organization must be involved in the programme of rural development.
 2. Developmental projects should not be concentrated in the local government headquarters. Let the projects be spread to cover rural communities within the local government.
 3. Private companies should be encouraged to invest and build industries in rural communities with abundant raw materials.

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