

Rural and Community Development in Nigeria: An Assessment

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Abstract: *The paper examines rural or community development in Nigeria with emphasis on the institutions, agencies, policies and strategies employed to bring about the much needed rural development in the country. It goes further to assess the impacts of the various efforts made by both the domestic and foreign governments and international organizations, institutions, agencies and non-governmental organizations to bring about real development at the grassroots level. In the attempt to do this, clarification of concepts like development, rural areas, and rural development was carried out, which formed the theoretical basis of the analysis. It was found out that efforts made by the Nigerian government though several strategies like the nation's development plans from colonial era to date which were ex-rayed did not bring about meaningful development. Similarly international organizations and regional strategies have not lead to any significant improvement in the living conditions of the rural dwellers and rural development in general. It was also found out that a number of issues such as corruption and mismanagement, faulty planning from above rather than bottom-up approach; pursuance of the colonial and neo-colonial economic and social policies which were anti people among other factors led to failure of the rural development efforts. The paper therefore concludes among other things that for rapid and sustained rural development to take place, the lopsided and urban based development process must be reversed to rural-based and bottom-up approach, government to continue to create conducive environment for rural development to thrive, change of attitudes and orientation by all and sundry, particularly the leadership class in Nigeria in order to minimize corruption and mismanagement of resources. Therefore, for rural development to be realistic and enduring, these measures should be given priority attention, especially at the implementation stages.*

I. Introduction

Nigeria gained independence in 1960 from the British colonial government. Ever since then, rural or community development has been declared a priority by the successive governments, be it civilian or military. In this regard, several organizations, institutions and agencies have been set up to undertake and monitor the complicated process of nation-building, development and integration. This post colonial orientation is a deviation from the erstwhile colonial arrangement whereby development efforts in all spheres were concentrated in the urban areas to the neglect of rural areas. Hence, projects such as the construction of roads, bridges, schools, railway lines, air trip, ports and marketing boards, among others, were all aimed at opening the rural areas as a link for the easy exploitation of export raw materials.

However, the declared objectives and policy statements of various governments in Nigeria have been mere rhetoric and smoke-screens intended not only to diffuse criticisms but to hide what the whole thing has been i.e. a systematic exploitation and dehumanization of the rural dwellers. In spite of this criticism, there is no doubt that the Nigerian government and its leaders have not only recognized the fact of the important roles which the rural sector plays in the generation of national wealth but also that over 70% of Nigerians live in rural areas. It is to be noted that Nigeria is not alone in the recognition of these facts. Leaders of the developing countries in Africa have also come to accept the development of rural areas as a sine qua non for national development.

In Nigeria, over the years the stated objectives and strategies of rural and community development have been pronounced by policy makers and those concerned with the issue of development. But there still exist enormous gap between policy formulation and implementation and the reality of the level of the development of the rural populace. For example, several approaches in terms of rural development planning and execution have been adopted. Some of these included the creation of states, local government areas, mobilization of people for local participation in planning and implementation of community development projects in order to create new centres of development, and thus stem the drift from rural to urban areas. A look at the National Development plans of Nigeria from 1975-1985 and other rural development programmes like Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, River Basin Development Authorities, Agricultural Development Projects and many others have emphasized the need to tackle the problem of rural under-development. On the part of government therefore there is the realization that there is need to bring the neglected rural areas into the mainstream of national development.

The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine the pattern of rural and community development in Nigeria, especially in those areas which have the greatest impact on the lives of rural dwellers. We intend to establish that the pattern of development of the rural areas was not meant to improve the lives of the rural dwellers. On the contrary, this process has been geared towards their exploitation and impoverishment despite their enormous contribution to national wealth and the fact that over 70% of Nigerians live in the country-side. It is further argued that the bane of Nigeria's development process is the neo-colonial, dependent economic system operating in the country. This system breeds mass poverty and deprivation, social unrest and political instability like the types Nigeria is facing today-uprising of Boko Haram, ethnic militia, armed robberies, and kidnappings, among others. The rest of the paper will be dedicated to conceptual clarification, theoretical basis of the work, in dept analysis of the strategies and efforts towards rural and community development in Nigeria, and the assessment of these efforts, and finally recommendations and conclusion.

II. Conceptual Issues.

The following key concept will be defined in this work. They are development, rural areas, and rural or community development.

Development

The concept of development is very difficult to define because it is value loaded. It is often equated with economic growth or economic development. Indeed the two concepts are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. Economic development is an essential component of development, yet it is not the only one. There are many other aspects of development.

According to Rodney (1972:9), he defines "development" as: "a many-side process. At the level of the individuals, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well being". On the other hand Todaro (1977:96-98) says that:

Development must therefore be conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. In essence, development must represent the entire gamut of changes by which the entire social system, turned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within the system moves away from the conditions of life regarded as materially and spiritually "better".

This means that development involves the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system. This also involves, in addition to improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutions, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs.

The implication of these two definitions is that "development" goes beyond economic indicators. It is both a physical process and a state of mind. The institutions or structures like construction of railways, schools, hospital etc are aspect of development. The second aspect of development is that the people must change their attitudes for good.

Also, Seers (1969:3) asked certain questions regarding the concept of development. He says that:

The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems has been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income doubled.

It therefore means that development per se can not be tied to economic advancement only but a general improvement in the living conditions of the people over time.

Development is also aimed at improving the living conditions of the people through the effective management of both the human and materials resources. Thus, Gana (1986:2) noted that "Development concerns the capacity and creative capability of a people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the imaginative and practical application of their creative talent and productive power".

This implies that the people must be empowered to be able to meet their basic needs of food, housing, health, transport, education, employment, reduction in poverty level and increased per capita income among others. This is what is lacking in the rural areas of Nigeria and else where in Africa where about eighty percent of the population live in the rural areas.

A critical examination of the definition of “development” by the scholars quoted above means that “development” must necessarily include, the reduction or elimination of poverty, illiteracy, disease, malnutrition, joblessness, etc. It is a programme which has the objective and strategy aimed at transforming the citizens in the rural areas from being the victims of poverty, ignorance and disease into a contented human beings, able to earn an income capable of sustaining a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their families. It also means the ability to provide the basic necessities of life such as food, jobs, affordable and accessible health care, good roads, water, electricity and education, among many other things for the people.

Rural Area

The word “rural” connotes a place with agricultural orientation; the houses are farm houses, barns, sheds and other structures of similar purposes. In the opinion of Olisa et al (1992:65) population is the main characteristic that differentiates rural from urban areas, especially in the developing countries. In this regard, in Nigeria an area with a population of 20,000 people and below is classified as a rural area. However, this is not adequate to explain a rural area. Therefore according to Olisa et al (1992:65):

The main features of rural areas are depression, degradation and deprivation. Many rural villages are immersed in poverty so palpable that the people are the embodiment of it. In most rural area in Nigeria, basic infrastructure where they exist at all, are too inadequate for meaningful development.

In other words, the rural areas lack virtually all the good things of life like roads, medical and health facilities, portable water, electricity etc. As pointed out above, these characteristics are not limited to rural areas alone but are also found in urban areas in Nigeria and other developing countries. The people engage in subsistence agriculture, their standard of living is very low, earning only a few thousands of naira annually, they are poorly served by almost all public amenities and they generally show considerable resistance to change in any form.

Rural Development

The concept of rural development or community development will be used interchangeably to mean the same thing. The scope of the concept of rural or community development is very wide. It is a multi-dimensional process involving such areas as agriculture, health, education, provision of rural infrastructures, social life, political and economic issues, commerce and industry, among others, and their integration with the national economy. Since the scope of the concept is wide it is the pivot on which a sound national development in all its ramifications can effectively be achieved. It is, however often assumed by policy makers and development planners that rural development is synonymous with agriculture. To correct this impression, it is very necessary to carry out a detailed conceptualization of the concept by scholar in the field of rural development.

Since the concept of “rural development” is very wide in scope, it is necessary to write about an integrated approach to the definition of the concept. Thus, according to the United Nations (1976:4):

The concept of integrated rural development implies that it is a composite or comprehensive programme for rural development in which all relevant sectors such as agriculture, education, housing, health and employment are conceived as interlinking elements in a system having horizontal as well as vertical linkage in operational and spatial terms.

According to Aziz, (1999), the concept of rural development should be viewed as a holistic concept, which recognizes the complexity and inter-relatedness of the many variables which influence the quality of life in rural areas. It is a complex process, which involves the interaction of economic, social, political, cultural, technological and other situational factors. Hence for the actualization of the concept, these factors have to be integrated with local government policies and plans with the objectives of improving the quality of life of the people in the rural sector.

Furthermore, according to Mabogunje, (1981), rural development is concerned with the self-sustaining improvement of rural areas and implies a broad based re-organization and mobilization of the rural masses so as to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with the changes consequent upon this.

In the opinion of Gana, (1996), rural development is important not only for its impact on rural places and people but also for its contribution to the over all development of the nation. In the Nigerian experience where the bulk of the people and land are rural, and where the level of rural output is very low, rural mobilization provides the quickest and most direct route to national development. This would require the adoption of appropriate technology for raising rural productivity and efficient utilization of resources, creation

of efficient transport network for rural and urban areas to ensure easy transportation of agricultural produce for massive food production and supply of industrial raw materials.

It is to be observed that the ambit of rural development is very wide indeed, and it requires a comprehensive approach. It includes generation of new employment, more equitable access to arable land, equitable distribution of income, widespread improvement in health, nutrition and housing, creation of incentives and opportunities. It also involves the ability of the local government to create wider opportunities for individuals to realize their full potentials through education and sharing in the decisions and actions which affect their lives.

III. Institutions, Agencies And Strategies For Rural Development In Nigeria

It is imperative that we examine the institutions, agencies and strategies that Nigeria has adapted over the years to tackle issues relating to rural development and their impacts on the society generally. It is often erroneously believed that rural development through the instrumentality of local government was considered almost synonymous with increased agricultural output of productivity. Thus, government policies and strategies towards the rural areas had always started with the premise that a forward thrust in agriculture is one of the essentials for initiating a broader rural development process. This misconception had led to a series of inappropriate policies and strategies such as agricultural extension approach, the community development programmes, notably among which were the River Basin Development Authorities and the Agricultural Development Projects. Experiments with the various agricultural development programmes showed that they could not improve even agricultural production, which was their main focus, let alone the living conditions of the rural sector.

It is therefore important at this point to review the institutions, agencies, policies and strategies of Nigeria's development planning from colonial era to the present time to see how they affect rural development. For more details of the various development plans, the works of Ifeanyi (2006:144-149) and Enyi (2010:84-92) are pertaining

Planning for rural development dates back to 1946 when the colonial administration formulated the Ten-Year Plan for Development and Welfare for Nigeria. This was presented in the National Paper No. 24 of 1945 which could accurately be constituted as amalgamation of projects but which were not related to any overall economic targets of the country.

Under this plan, the colonial government contributed to the financing of various research institutions such as the West Africa Oil Palm Institute (Nigeria) in 1939, Nigeria Agricultural Project Mokwa in 1949, West African Research Institute (Nigeria) in 1951, Marketing Boards and Regional Development Boards in the 1950s – 1970s. These Institutes and Boards were set up with the primary motive of increasing the volume of export crops for British industries while less attention was given to the improvement of the problems of individual producers and the rural communities generally.

In 1955-1960 Development Plans, the emphasis was on increased agricultural and industrial production with a view to bringing about a rise in come and improvement in the standard of living of the people. Just like the previous plan there were no specific projects for the benefits of rural people of Nigeria. Various scholars have commented on this situation. According to Nnoli (1977:139):

The British colonial bourgeoisie in Nigeria succeeded in establishing a colonial economy in the country as a framework for consolidating and maintaining underdevelopment. This involved systematic appropriation of economic surplus for Britain's development, discouragement of rural manufacturing, stagnation of agriculture as well as maintenance of mass illiteracy and sustained technological backwardness.

The above view point was supported by Onimode (1982:122) when he said; "The plan's conception of rural development was up till 1949 the improvement of the colonial economy as a version of the traditional mode of production... such conception aggravated and perpetuated the basic features of underdevelopment".

The role of the government during this period was merely the classical one of providing physical and social infrastructures on overhead capital as the foundation of the economy. In buttressing this point, Cannon (1982:24) said that:

The private enterprise was rather entrusted with the major job of developing the economy. The government role was to create favourable conditions for this through loans, subsidiaries, and technical assistance. As the private enterprise was essentially British, this meant mobilizing Nigerian resources for British capital accumulation.

The above views go to support the idea that the colonial plans and policies did not in any way contribute to rural development. We identify with these views and to add that these colonial legacies were carried forward to the post colonial era.

The era of rural development by the then regional governments was ushered in by the Western Nigeria Government when it formally launched the farm settlement scheme in 1960. They were encouraged by the lack of wide spread employment among primary schools leavers in the region and unused areas in the riverine providences, which could be put to use. They were desirous of pioneering a new system of farming, which involved new techniques and the use of government supervised credit. The Eastern Nigerian Government operated similar schemes. The 1967 Civil War in the country and its aftermath paralyzed the operation of these schemes. The settlement schemes in the West failed to achieve their lofty goals. Reports indicated that the rates of return on investment were too low for the average farmer to endure. The demonstration effect on the neighbouring farmers was peripheral and its effect on alleviating the unemployment problems of the school leavers had been virtually insignificant.

For instance one of the main grievances behind the Agbokoya up-rising in the Western state in 1969, was the “take it or leave it” low prices fixed for their farm products by the Western Nigerian Marketing Board. Yet the situation never changed and the farmers had to accept them for lack of better sources of income. This picture was the same, if not worse, for other marketing Boards (Derrick 1986: 989-990). The then Northern Regional Government joined the crusade and established farm training institutes, some of which formed the bedrock of the Schools/Colleges of Agriculture in the Northern States.

The truly Nigeria’s First Development Plan from 1962-1968 made greater financial allocations with the objective of enhancing the standard of living although there has been so far no coherent policy for rural development. The order of priority in the first plan in terms of allocation of fund was transport and communication, electricity, primary production and trade and industry.

The second National Development Plan, 1970-1974, stated its order of priorities to be agriculture, industry, transportation and manpower development. The plan further strengthened the continuation of the dichotomy between the rural and urban sectors, in spite of the lofty objectives of the plan, one of which was to build a just and egalitarian society.

It is important to note that the concern of the federal government for rural development, received its first articulated expression in the guideline to the Third National Development Plan 1975-1980. It was envisaged that the development of the rural sector during the Third Plan would concentrate on raising productivity in agriculture, the predominant occupation of the rural areas, through increase in per capital income, more even distribution of income, reduction in the level of unemployment, diversification of the economy, etc. It would also ensure the provision of basic social amenities such as water and electricity. It was projected that under the National Youth Service Corps Scheme, all doctors must serve for a year or two in the rural areas before being registered. Increase in the supply of high level manpower, balanced development and indigenization of economic activity were also some of the objectives of the plan.

Other efforts made towards stimulating rural development were through research from the Badeku Project initiated by the Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Ibadan, the Uboma Project, the socio medical project at Igbo-Ora in Oyo State. Ishoya Rural Development project by the University of Ife, the Guided Change Project by the Institute for Agricultural Research of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and the Rural Development Project of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. These projects served as models of what can be achieved in the rural areas. It was unfortunate that they also did not make any significant impact on the welfare of the rural people in the various areas.

The break through in rural development came in 1976 with the creation of the Department of Rural Development in the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. The department coordinated and monitored the progress of the integrated agricultural development projects under the package approach. It was the plan of the Federal Government to extend agricultural projects to all states with the objective of increasing agricultural productivity and incomes of the rural population and improving the living standards of the rural dwellers.

The government in launching the local government reforms of 1976, considered as an important milestone in the evolution of the Nigeria Local Government System, emphasized the need for the participation and mobilization of the people at the grassroots. The government stated that it was through an effective local government system that the human and material resources of this country could be mobilized for local development. It hoped that the reforms would further enshrine the principle of participatory democracy and political responsibility to every Nigerian. It stated that the reform would ensure that every stratum of the Nigerian society would benefit from the continued prosperity of the country. Owing to shortage of funds and personnel the local governments have also not lived up to the expectations of the rural populace.

The 1981–1985 Fourth National Development Plan did not make way departure from the position of the previous plans on rural development. The plan maintained that the over-riding aim of the development effort remained that of bringing about an improvement in the living conditions of the people. Some of the programmes

like the Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), etc. were meant to bring about rural development in Nigeria. They too did not bring about much success because they were elitistly conceived and implemented.

The first, second, third and fourth development plans in Nigeria, like its colonial predecessor, were neither national nor developmental. According to Eteng (1982:21):

The orientation of post-colonial planning is probably the most decisive in its perpetuation of underdevelopment. First, the post-colonial environment, which essentially defines the problem of underdevelopment, is taken as the earlier colonial environment. No serious effort is made for example to terminate the stifling post (neo) colonial domination and exploitation that is the basic generating force of contemporary underdevelopment.

Eteng further maintained that even in the 1970–1974 plan when indigenization was introduced, this was not addressed to changing the structure of the post (neo) colonial capitalist planning and economy.

It is equally important to state that, in Nigeria today, policies and strategies to enhance rural development have enjoyed the general attention of foreign governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGO) which collaborate with Nigeria in different areas of economic, political and social sectors, visible among these organizations are the UNDP, the World Bank, the IMF, DFID, USAID, the UNO, and NGOs. At the regional front we have the African Union (AU) propelled initiatives such as New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The cumulative impacts of the policies, programmes and activities of these institutions and organizations significantly affect the living conditions of the ordinary Nigerians and to large extent the development of the rural areas.

The NEPAD is a home grown African initiative to address the critical development challenges especially those that have to do with poverty and improving the living standards of Africans-including Nigerians. This became imperative when African leaders woke up to discover that over 340 million Africans or half of its population lived on less than \$ 1 per day. The mortality rate of children under five years of age is 140 per 1000, and life expectancy is only 54 year. Only 58 percent of the population has access to safe water (Olokun, 2002).

Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) seek to attend to the development, and particularly poverty eradication goals and issues of 189 countries of the United Nations (UN). Nigeria as an active member of the UN is decisively involved in the implementation of the policy framework of the goals by putting in place her own plan and policy structure that would enhance the success of the MDGs in Nigeria. This policy framework is the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). NEEDS is aimed at eradicating poverty and brining about sustainable development through agencies such as the NAPEP.

The US and UK government have through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department for International Development respectively have collaborated using various schemes and programmes to reduce poverty in Africa and particularly in Nigeria. These agencies have various collaborative efforts and partnership with the Nigeria government in supporting poverty eradication through provision of health and others social services such as the Maternal Morality Support Programme where pregnant and nursing mothers and children under five years are targeted for free health care.

As can be observed, most policies and initiatives aimed at ameliorating poverty and enhance rural development in Africa and particularly Nigeria has largely failed. According to Olokun, (in Orji 2005: 218): “The dream of great Africa renaissance after social, economic and political realities of the continent have defiled 37 development plans which were said to be alien to Africa or drafted by experts and institutions that failed to appreciate the peculiarities of the continent”.

In effect what is said here is that the post colonial era was no different from the colonial era. In this regard, Enyi (2010) maintain that: like the colonial policies, the post colonial Nigerian policies exhibited a basic lack of urgency in any programme or project. The patent lack of plan discipline is another problem of planning in Nigeria. Very often the bureaucratic bourgeoisie elevate their selfish class interests over and above national interests and objectives. In the final analysis, it is not only that plans for rural development are faulty, there are never in the interest of the ruling class to implement.

He maintains that, the ultimate objective of the national development planning effort should be the improvement of the welfare of the individual and society. This therefore presupposes the selection of appropriate means to meet the needs of the various communities. The meaningful formulation of a plan to meet the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian situation must inevitably be from bottom to top as opposed to the present approach of top to bottom. In this way, the needs and problems of the people would be identified and appropriate measures for resolving them will be selected, after which targets will be set, followed by the formulation of the nation’s plan. This approach allows for effective mobilization of the communities, the various interest groups, and the mass media for local participation. The present practice of conceiving planning as a

purely technical process of aggregating projects and programmes from the top will only benefit a few individuals at the expense of rural development (Enyi 2010:91-92).

IV. An Assessment Of The Rural Development Efforts In Nigeria

Having looked at the institutions, agencies, policies and strategies for rural development in Nigeria, it would be necessary to carry out an assessment of the rural development efforts in the country. To start with, it must be stated that the rural development initiatives by the government have created a culture of dependence on the part of the people rather than the people themselves initiating development orientations. While it is the responsibility of government to create the enabling environment for community or rural development, the attendant corruption, greed and mismanagement associated with these institutions and agencies have not allowed them to achieve their desired objectives. In this connection Okpaga (2004) asserted that "Rather than making these institutions vehicle for rural transformation, they become conduit pipes from where public funds are siphoned into private pockets". Added to the above is the fact that the British colonial administration did not concern itself with planning for the development of the rural areas. Indeed, development is the very antithesis of colonialism. The few amenities and infrastructures that were available were concentrated in the few urban towns particularly in the "European Quarters" or "White Reserved Areas".

The rural popular that constituted over 70% of Nigerians and who produced the bulk of the colonial wealth only felt the impact of government in the form of tax drives, occasional visits by colonial officials and their agents and stories fed them by few urban dwellers or those who had been there. Thus, Onimode (1981:33) rightly observed that: "The rural dwellers who were impoverished by multiple taxation, broken by colonial police and court repression, and submerged in a culture of silence' through illiteracy, were undoubtedly among the most brutally exploited by the savage colonialism of Britain".

This situation has not radically changed even after independence from British rule. The exploitative and western oriented policies and programmes of the colonial era have continued since flag independence. One area that the western oriented policies and programmes have persisted since 1960 is in the area of agriculture. Emphasis was placed on the production of cash crops and the importation of foreign foods to the neglect of local staples. The continued pursuance of this policy with the resultant neglect of the rural areas and the exploitation of peasant farmers has proved disaster for the country.

The urban-based nature of Nigeria's development process led to a gradual deterioration in the quality of life in the rural areas, thus stimulating rural-urban migration on a massive scale, especially when mineral oil over took agriculture as the mainstay of the national economy. The helpless situation of the rural communities was accentuated by the exploitative tendencies of the Nigerian Marketing Boards of the 1950s, lack of incentives to farmers, antiquated farming techniques, lack of storage facilities, poor transportation network etc. fastened the decline in agriculture generally (Nnadozie, 1986:11).

Another area in the Nigerian agricultural policies and programmes where rural dwellers and farmers are being marginalized is the area of big agricultural schemes in various parts of the country. The policy pursued by government since mid 1970s ostensibly to boost agriculture started with Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) launched in 1976, the Green Revolution in the second Republic and various budgetary incentives in large-scale agriculture. Similarly the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) and big irrigation dam schemes were ostensibly to improve rural development. All these projects scattered in different part of the country and jointly financed by the World Bank and Nigerian government did not help much in the improvement of the living standards of the rural populace. Rather it has worsened the plight of peasant by depriving them of their lands as happened in Bakolori project in Sokoto state. The beneficiaries of these capital intensive agricultural programmes and schemes were the big barons who live in the urban area. The monies they get as loans never went to agriculture but to other businesses. The neglect of the peasant farmers has obviously led to faster decline in agricultural production with attendant negative consequences for rural development (Nnadozie, 1986).

It is also disheartening to note that in the area of investment and government provision of amenities, the urban areas are more favoured than the rural setting. Studies by Diejomaoh (1973:100-103) have shown that over the years: "The beneficiaries of government expenditure on education, health, water supply, electricity, industries and road construction are mainly urban dwellers and that less than 30% of total government development expenditure is designed for the benefit of rural communities".

In spite of the importance of and potentialities of the rural sector in terms of its workforce, and its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), of the estimated private sector investment amounting to about N1,632 million in the second national development plan period (1970-1974), only N246 million or 15% was spend in the rural areas. This pattern is basically the same in the Third and fourth Development plan periods, 1975-1985 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1970-74).

It is regrettable to also observe that the various aids and assistance to Nigeria by international organizations and institutions like UNO, USAID, DFID, WHO, and others have not been utilized to the benefit

of rural development in Nigeria. This has been due to rampant corruption and gross mismanagement at all levels of governments in Nigeria.

The net effect of the above analysis is that the rural areas of Nigerians are greatly neglected in various spheres of human endeavour. They lack the basic needs of life, they are deprived and exploited, and hence rural development in Nigeria has remained a mirage.

V. Conclusion/Recommendation

From the foregoing analysis it is obvious that rural or community development in Nigeria has not received its fair share in the scheme of things. The institutions and agencies charged with the responsibility for rural development and the policies and strategies adopted to meet these objectives have not lived up to expectation of the rural dwellers in particular and the nation in general. It has been shown that in spite of the numerous natural resources that Nigeria is endowed with, majority of the citizens, particularly in the rural areas live below 'absolute poverty line'.

Therefore there exists mass poverty as a result of the lopsided and urban-based development process which the governments in Nigeria have pursued till date. For instance the various World Bank, IMF and other multinational corporations-sponsored large-scale agricultural projects were not intended to better the lot of the rural dwellers. These projects and schemes are based on obsolete trickle-down theory by which the main beneficiaries are supposed to diffuse information and motivate the small peasant farmers, who would then follow their example. It would be difficult for Nigeria to attack its poverty unless it stops discriminating against peasant farmers and rural population. The above situations revolve on the neo-colonial and dependent nature of Nigerian economy and society. This appears to be the crux of Nigeria's development and other problems, including that of political instability currently ravaging the country.

The point should be made that as long as we operate this economic system, development in the real sense of the term, will remain a mirage. Mass poverty and deprivation currently facing the rural people will worsen and our independence will remain a sham. Indeed the contemporary Nigerian state can be described as a comprador state – a state in which its institutions and officials operate as agents of capitalism and imperialism under this social system, Nigerian development programmes, particularly the so-called new strategies for 'rural development' are only smokescreens intended to cover the real thing, which is the continued domination and exploitation by western or foreign investors.

Arising from all the above, this paper offers a number of recommendations as a way of solving the lingering problems of rural underdevelopment in Nigeria. These include the following:

1. Since over 70% of Nigerian population live in the rural areas and produce the greatest wealth of the nation, the rural areas should be accorded more recognition in terms of budgetary provisions and provision of social and economic amenities.
2. The production needs of rural dwellers centre around poor infrastructural facilities, inadequate extension services, and lack of financial credit. Therefore feeder roads are urgently needed to effectively link and integrate peasants scattered all over the country with the urban centres to enable them to evacuate their products from the farms. They also need adequate water supply for drinking and irrigation, especially in the arid parts of the country.
3. Government should provide the inability environment to foster rural and community development in Nigeria. Facilities such as education, health services, electricity supply, improving literacy, health and general quality of life are acutely inadequate in the rural areas.
4. There is also need to adequately train the farmers in the use of new techniques of farming and for them to be provided with farming equipments like tractors, fertilizers and pest control chemicals at subsidized prices that those peasants can afford. In this regard, the current practice of absentee farmers living in the urban areas trading in fertilizers meant for real farmers should be stopped. Government should endeavour to deal directly with the real farmers in the rural areas if rural development is to be achieved.
5. The so-called "agricultural credit guarantee scheme" under which commercial banks are encouraged to give peasant farmers loans guaranteed by the federal government through the Central Bank need to be reviewed. This is because the processes involved, including feasibility studies- required to secure those loans are beyond the capability of peasant farmers. The fact of the matter is that agricultural credit facilities in Nigeria have been designed for the big capitalist farmers. This policy should be reviewed to favour the peasant farmers who live in the rural areas.
6. The rampant and endemic corruption, greed and mismanagement associated with institutions for rural development should be ripped in the bud. This requires the intensification of the crusade against these vices by the government and her agencies like EFCC, ICPC, among others. This requires the change of attitude by the political leaders to deal with the situation squarely. Therefore, the Nigerian state should make deliberate efforts to create a virile and credible institutions and structures that would enhance rural development.

7. Further more, it is advocated that Nigeria should try to break away from the neo-colonial and dependent nature of the economic and social system. As long as we operate these social and economic systems of dependence, development in the real sense of the term will remain a mirage. In the long run what we would witness will be continued exploitation and domination by western or foreign investors.
8. Rural development in Nigeria should not be the concern of only Federal, State and local governments. It is important that individuals, communities, corporate organizations, non-governmental organizations and international organizations and agencies must be deeply involved in the efforts at eradicating poverty, enhancing rural development and the overall national development of the country.

In the final analysis, there is the need for change of attitudes on the part of the citizenry, particularly public office holders to embrace the virtues of hard work, commitment, integrity transparency and accountability in the conduct of government business. It is then, and only then that rural development in Nigeria will become reality.

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