

POLICIES, POLITICS AND ENVIRONMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to examine the various rural and urban development policies embraced upon by various administrations in Nigeria, to examine the interplay between politics and the achievement of these policies and as well the impact of eanvironmental variables on the achievement of rural development policies in Nigeria. The study adopted the Marxist political economic theory as its theoretical tool. It employs content analysis in the discussion of various variables in the study. The findings of the study among others revealed that successive administration has evolved a lot of policies aimed at developing the rural areas, but none of these policies appears to achieve the intended development at the rural development exhibited by the elite class. The study among others recommended the adoption of bottom top approach to rural development to provide solution to these much lingering problem in Nigeria.

Keywords: politics, policies, environment, rural areas, development. Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria gained independence in 1960 from the British colonial government. Ever since then, 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 (Enyi, 2014).

Right from the colonial period, the rural sector constitutes the social and economically backward areas of Nigeria. Besides, the gap between the rural areas and urban areas has continued to widen in an alarming proportion. Invariably, the peasant population who formed the bulk of rural areas and produce much of the agricultural products that the nation depend on seemed neglected by government, a situation that has resulted in the much orchestrated problems of rural-urban drift, declining agricultural production and its attendant food shortage, unemployment, urban congestion and over stretched facilities (Ottong, Ering & Akpan, 2010; Saheed & Okide, 2012).

However, in Nigeria and in most Third World societies, there had been an increasing upsurge in the concern for problems of underdevelopment especially as they affect rural areas. The concern is the need to optimize yields from natural as well as human resources by exerting control of influence upon all parts of such resources in order to realize maximum benefit from the development efforts (Ebong, 2019).

Abasiekong (2019) observed that developing countries have not more than ever come to be convinced that in order to ensure the overall development of their countries, the rural area must be transformed and

brought into the mainstream of their countries. The realization of this fact prompted government to formulate policies aimed at the improvement of the rural areas and pursued by governmental authorities at various levels (Federal, State and Local) and communities, particularly since the 1960s.

Historically, efforts at developing rural areas have been pursued since the colonial times. The concern has been to transform the mostly agrarian society in order to reach a set of development goals based on the capacities and needs of the people. Policies aimed at the improvement of the rural areas and pursued by various governments (federal, state and local) have been put in place and pursued particularly since 1960s. Nigeria rural communities have ever before the advent of colonization indulge in various forms of community self-help schemes such as construction of village moats, shrines, village squares, markets and a host of other activities Ering (2012). But the institutionalization of modern development schemes can be traced to the 1920s when the British colonial office adopted the strategy of community development as a special development model for all colonial territories. The concern then was to make up for the short comings of traditional British school system by imparting skills such as carpentry, house building, shoe repairing, etc in community development centres.

After Nigeria's political independence in 1960, federal and regional governments vigorously pursued conscious and deliberate policies of transforming rural areas. In the 60s, the federal and regional governments were preoccupied with the establishment of farm settlement schemes. This policy thrust gave rise to the various farm plantation spread across Cross River State and other states of the federation. The prime objective of these development policies was to prevent the exodus of youths from villages to the urban areas. However, this failed because they were largely incoherent and uncoordinated efforts and programmes within individual settlements.

In 1976, another rural development policy was rolled out, it was the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and was a major rural development policy of Murtala/Obasanjo government. The concern at this time was to bring down the escalating prices of food items and arrest the rate of food importation (Nzirim, 1985). But it turned out to produce more millionaires at the expense of rural farmers. The next policy that was initiated by the Obasanjo regime was the establishment of River Basins and Rural Development Authorities in 1978. Though succeeding governments continued with this policy option with all amount of determination to change the fortunes of rural areas, it has tended to make rural dwellers to recede deeper into walloping poverty (Ejue, 1998). This witnessed another policy failure and waste of huge amount of financial resources put into the programme.

The World Bank in the 70s made immense efforts in helping to develop the rural areas. It decided to shift more attention to rural development as a means of alleviating the problems of rural dwellers. These programmes did not yield much dividend to the assaulted peasants (World Bank, 1980). In the same vein, the civilian regime of Shagari in 1980 launched the Green Revolution. Though the efforts were geared towards improving agricultural productivity, it turned out to be a revolution for the rich instead of addressing the problems of the poor. Despite all these efforts made in the past to effect rural development in the country, the conditions of the rural dwellers have not improved, rather they have further deteriorated.

The Babangida administration in 1985 introduced the Directorate for Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). This involved or has to do with an integrated rural development approach of all stakeholders (persons and agencies) concerned, aimed at involving rural people in determining policies and planning and implementing programmes that are designed to improve their economic, social and cultural conditions and enable them to make a positive contribution to national development. The Directorate helped in opening rural roads and providing other infrastructures, thus raising the hopes of the

rural people. However, the scheme eventually collapsed due to the lack of the culture of continuity of government policies and programmes. It died a natural death, Ejue (1998). In 1986, Mrs. Mariam Babangida introduced the “Better Life Programme”. The aim was to change the fortunes of rural poor women and improve their wellbeing. The better life Programme” was later changed to “Family Support Programme” by Mariam Abacha during the Sani Abacha administration, but the aims and concerns remain the same. In spite of the good intentions and resources pumped into the programme, it turned out to be a monumental failure. This situation led to the compelling need to integrate the rural areas of the country into mainstream of national development. The programme served the purposes of the rich urban women than the rural women that it was designed for. It became “Better Life for Urban Women”.

The democratically-elected Obasanjo regime at inception in 1999, put in place a major policy design aimed at alleviating the poor tagged “Poverty Alleviation Programme”. The direction of the programme from the outset could not be ascertained. So much money pumped into the programme. It has been argued that the policy thrust of Olusegun Obasanjo Administration towards the eradication of unemployment and poverty, it doggedly and seriously pursued could have changed the fortune of rural poor in particular and Nigeria in general. In spite of the billion of naira that was put into the programme, poverty skyrocketed within the eight years of his administration. Poverty figures released by the Central Bank of Nigeria (2008), showed that 66% of Nigerians were living below the poverty line. Poverty line is an imaginary international income level for those living below one dollar per day.

The Yar'Adua/Jonathan Administration in 2011 continued with the Poverty Alleviation Programme of Obasanjo, and more financial allocations were made into reducing poverty levels in the society. The emergence of militancy in the Niger Delta region and the Boko Haram crises in North Eastern Nigeria coupled with limited financial resources thwarted the implementation of the programme.

It must be argued here that the rural development policies taken so far since the colonial period were contained in Nigeria's major development plans 1946-1956; 1962-68; 1970-74; 1975-1980; 2020-85. These policies could be subsumed under regional development, agricultural development and community development policies. The prime objectives of these development policies were to increase rural productivity and income in rural areas. And since agriculture is the predominant form of activity in rural areas, the most important instruments for achieving these objectives have been agricultural programme.

The Concept of Policy

Policy is typically described as a principle(s) or rule(s) to guide decision and rational outcome. A policy can also be considered as a statement of intent or a commitment. A set of policies are principles, rules and guidance formulated or adopted by an organization to reach its long term goals and typically published in a booklet or other form that are widely accessible.

According to Vande Ben and Hawkins (1996), policy is a form of directed action which indicate as clearly as possible what entails as early as possible what one want to achieve, how one want to do it and how much time is taken to achieve such goals. Policy can be legislated or guideline that govern how laws should be put in operation. In view of the foregoing, rural and agricultural development policies refers to those guidelines formulated strictly for the development of rural areas and the agricultural sector of the country.

Development

The concept of development can hardly be defined 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), 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 wellbeing”. On the other hand Todaro (1977) 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) 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 cannot 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 elsewhere 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. Development, from its inception, is a kind of holistic movement and rural development is not an exception. Therefore, rural development is a multidimensional process by which the productivity, income and welfare, in terms of health, nutrition, education and other features of satisfactory life of rural people can be improved upon or transformed.

Environment

Environment in this regard has to do with those factors which have in one way or the other influenced the growth and development of the rural areas. It is concerned with the relationship between political, social, economic and cultural variables that tend to influence the attainment of rural development or in a structural functional term with the larger societal system. It is often thought of as the external factors affecting rural development. These could be political, economic, social, cultural and other environmental factors. Corruption and embezzlement of public funds have been factors that characterized the administration of development programmes in Nigeria. According to NEEDS Document (2004), systemic corruption and low levels of transparency and accountability have been major sources of development failure. It gives forms of corruption but those that have affected the rural development programmes are: misappropriation or diversion of funds; demanding of percentages from contractors over an awarded contract (i.e. kickback); under and over invoicing, bribery, etc. These forms of corruption had become salient factors in the implementation of rural development policies of every administration for over the years.

The political environment is very critical to the performance of the administrative system, so this must be of immense interest to us. The first uncertainty that arises from the Nigerian political environment is the inability, since the birth of the Nigerian nation in 1914, to evolve or create institutions which can accommodate the diverse interests of the countries over 250 ethnic groups. Another environmental factor that affects rural development policies in Nigeria is the culture of corruption and embezzlement of funds.

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 areas 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 engaged 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), 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 (2020), 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 overall 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

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchor on the Marxian political economic theory. The State in Marxian Political Economic Theory continues to be an instrument of cheating and class dominance. To this end, Marx argues that as the masses became poorer and more numerous, the capitalist became fewer and controlled greater concentration of the means of production, whose full productiveness they throttled back for their own gain (Mazi and Mbah 2006).

Tenuche and Ogwo (2005) noted that the fundamental exploitative relations between the Nigeria elite classes who designed and implement rural development programmes and rural poor masses guarantee that rural development programmes and policies have the likelihood to consolidate the predominant class and exploitative interest of their imperialist collaborators. The assumption that the rural communities cannot identify their felt needs is an example of an opportunity for exploitation. Some of the policy efforts made so far which includes Agricultural Development Programme, Rural Infrastructural Development Programmes, Rural banking and Credit Guarantee Schemes, Educational Programmes that are rural

driven, Low cost Housing Scheme, Gender Development Policies and other poverty alleviation programmes. Resources for the programmes are controlled by the bureaucracy (Tenuche and ogwo, 2005). Bhagwan and Bhushan (2005) noted that after the end of colonial rule, the emerging free states-called the Third World countries, started the process of socio-economic development which led to phenomenal expansion of bureaucracy and the rise of a new class, a bureaucratic bourgeoisie in many of these countries. This class soon acquired social and political parameters on account of the various political and social factors. This new class was western oriented and framed in western methods of administration with the aid of western countries in the form of training abroad and financial assistance for development projects. This new class of administrators was able to establish bureaucratic authoritarianism and hierarchical formation which substituted for mass mobilization and popular participation, the two essential ingredients of development administration. To further support the analysis, Fezzes Heady in Bhagwan and Bhushan (2005) identified the following major characteristics of bureaucracy in the management of development programmes in the developing countries thus:

- The basic pattern of administration is initiative rather than indigenous;
- The bureaucracy are deficient in skilled manpower necessary for development programme;
- They work for realization of goals other than the achievement of programme objectives;
- There is widespread discrepancy between form and reality;
- Operational autonomy

The above elaborately stands to mark the planning and execution of rural development programmes unresponsive to rural needs, unrepresentative of the rural populace at large, and elitist in nature and character. Example is the well equipped nature of government hospital and health care centres in the urban cities. This is due to the fact that urban setting harbours the programmes' planners and managers. Also is the much propagated National Health Insurance Scheme. Privatization, Commercialization, Liberalization, Deregulation, etc. policies which remains exploitative-driven and class centered.

Rural and Urban Development Policies in Nigeria since Independence Since political independence in Nigeria, definite policy goals and objectives aimed at the improvement of rural areas were formulated. The first decade of this era (1960-1970) however witnessed no radical departure from the colonial conceptualization of rural development. Prompted by the hope enshrined in the sectorial development strategy (otherwise known as the agricultural development model), the planners and policy makers in the country assumed that the development of agriculture is synonymous to rural development. The policy objectives and goals of the government in the first National Development Plan (1962-1970) were therefore to raise the living standard of the small-scaled farmers, to increase agricultural output and productivity, to increase raw agricultural materials for the utilization of local industries and for exports and finally to raise the nutritional needs of the population (Nigeria, 1962). Governmental actions employed to promote these goals included the distribution of seeds, introduction of more agricultural methods through farm settlements, cooperative (nucleus) plantations, improved farm implements such as hydraulic pressers for the expression of palm oil and a greatly expanded agricultural extension service, the expansion of the installed capacity of electricity generation to 634mv to 1968, the expansion of railways length by the remaining 920.3km of Borno extension and the expansion of the system of tarred roads by about 3,220km (Osuntogun & Olufokunbi, 1986).

Some lapses were recognized with the first plan and this gave rise to the Nigeria's second National Development Plan of 1970-1974 (Nigeria, 1970). The plan specifically stated the country's rural development objectives of

- a) Creating rural employment opportunities with a view to checking rural out-migration and
- b) Improving the level and quality of social services and infrastructural facilities.

Nonetheless these goals were neither adequately provided for in the plan nor were there any specific programmes or projects designed to achieve them. A major strategy designed to improve the condition of living in rural Nigeria during the second National Development plan was the development of large-scale irrigation projects which gained prominence in the various states of the Sudan belt. The recognition of the impact of community self-help efforts was noted in the Second National Plan, 1970-74. Apart from stating that the development consciousness of these communities will be harnessed, government's support programme was lacking. In effect the pattern of community development in Nigeria remains largely unplanned and uncoordinated as reflected in the abandoned communal projects scattered over the entire national territory and the duplication and uneven spatial distribution of the projects completely by various communities. Also noted with this period is the launching of National Accelerated Food Production (NAFPP) in 2021 as a national network of agro services centres.

The third National development Plan: 1975-1980 witness the establishment of several policies and programmes such as Agricultural Development (ADPs), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDAs), the Agricultural Credit Guaranteed Scheme (ACGS) and the Green Revolution Programme. Of all these, the ADPs received better attention and a systematic approach to project planning due to the World Bank support it received and the moment the world bank withdrew their support the ADPs were merely existing while the others mentioned remained as political slogans (Adebayo, 2000). The programme of rural development for the provision of socio-economic infrastructures came under focus in 1986 with the establishment of rural development agency-the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) under Decree No 4 of 1986 with a determined focus on the development of the entire rural areas of Nigeria in order to improve the quality of life of the rural dwellers. DFRRI recorded remarkable success in the area of infrastructural development such as feeder roads, electricity and water supply. But the final blow to DFRRI was the National spirit of policy inconsistency and discontinuity of programmes and projects. After the demise of DFRRI in 1994, the functions were shared among the line Ministry of Water Resources and Rural Development. The result of that national error was that the proverbial half bread was totally withdrawn from the rural people.

The Better Life/Family Support Programme (BLP/FSP) was established in 1987 with a view to alleviate poverty and was transformed into Family Support Programme (FSP) and subsequently to Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in November, 1994, with the same objectives of encouraging rural dwellers, especially women to improve their standard of living. There were observable successes such as giving voice to the hitherto voiceless rural women and the establishment of recreational facilities. The programme also suffered a similar fate to that of DIFRRI as political power changes from one person to another.

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established in 1987 to tackle the problem of mass unemployment involving all categories of labour (skilled and unskilled), including the disguised unemployment street hawkers, both in rural and urban centres. The directorate focused its attention on agriculture, small scale enterprises, special public works and vocational skills development. Quite remarkable successes have been recorded in this regards and its impact is still being felt till today. The

establishment of People's bank and Community Banks was to liberalize access to credit by the in 1989; the operation of the people's bank faced many challenges among which are the unstable rate of branch expression, the dependency on government for funds and weak management as a result of which its effectiveness in alleviating problems of the poor remains insignificant. Even so the People's Bank is no more, it was merged with then NACB now NACRDB; Nigerian Agricultural Credit and Rural Development Bank. To date the effect of the merger is yet to be seen. The establishment of the Community Banks was intended to inculcate the banking habit in rural areas and providing needed banking services to members of their community. One cannot be carried away by the huge success of the Community Banks such as assisting business men with medium scale enterprises. The poor with no collateral and adequate deposit base were largely unable to meet their credit needs from these banks. Apart from this a large number of these banks are located in urban areas and most of their services are directed to the urban rich with less credit risks.

The National Fadama development Programme (NFDP) was established and later redesign to become the National Fadama development Project (NFDP), mainly funded by the World Bank with counterpart funding by the Federal Government and benefiting state governments. Fadama I i.e. Phase one of the National Fadama Development Project was implemented in 1993-1999 period in some selected states ADPs with the aim of encouraging and facilitating resource poor farmers to embark on dry season farming in order to generate increased income and alleviate poverty. Fadama II is a follow up to implementation of Fadama I, and seeks to address the noted shortcomings of Fadama I. Fadama II's strategy represents a shift from public sector domination to a community-driven development approach. The impact of this Fadama Programme can be felt but since the reduction of the counterpart funding by the world bank, not much can be seen any more, but the question begging for answer is “Does it mean that without the World Bank support the beneficiaries and stake holders will not survive or continue in the project.

The inception of the democratic government 1999 witnessed another development programme tagged “Poverty Alleviation Programme”. Nigerians believed that employment generation and poverty alleviation would increase with the programme, but the (PAP) later changed to the National programme on Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), which aimed at job creation as its poverty eradication strategy. However, to date, Nigerians are yet to feel the full impact of this programme. The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) was designed in 2004 with the objective of reducing poverty and empowering the poor, NEEDS sets out a series of quantitative performance targets to be achieved by 2007. Attempts were made to enshrine the principles of NEEDS at other levels of government by facilitating the processes of development of State Economic Empowerment Strategies (SEEDS) and local Economic Empowerment Strategies (LEEDS). The take-off of SEEDS and LEEDS were hampered by several factors, chief among which is the pervading feeling of compulsion to implement a uniform strategy over a diverse and complex set of institutions, interest and resources. This was later transformed in the Seven Point Agenda of the Yar'Adua Administration and since the demise of President Yar'Adua, the government of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, nothing seems to have changed in rural and agricultural policies in Nigeria.

However, in the year 2016, the Federal Government under Buhari administration came up with the establishment of another form of rural development programme tagged National Social Investment Programmes (N-SIPs). The central focus of these programmes was to ensure equal distribution of resources to the vulnerable population with specific attention on children, youths, women and elderly people. It has been suggested that “if Nigeria is to achieve the goal of being a top economy by year 2030, there is a need for strategic plan to support the most vulnerable in the society to catalyze productivity,

especially among the youthful workforce (N-SIP, 2018). Specifically, under this social investment initiative, there were four major components. These key components include: N-Power Programme: Which is a job creation and youth empowerment programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria to tackle the problem of high rate of youth unemployment and improve economic productivity. Youth unemployment is among the major socio-economic challenges in Nigeria, and it is obvious that young people who stay unemployed for a long time usually find it harder to get jobs and may begin to feel dejected (N-SIO, 2018). The aim of N-Power was to imbibe the learn work-entrepreneurship culture in Nigerian youths who are between the ages of 18 and 35 years. The scheme was designed to operate in batches, in which, each batch was expected to last for a maximum period of 2 years and eligibility includes both graduates and non-graduates. National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme: This was the second component of N-SIPs. According to United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF (2015) report, Nigeria has a total number of 13.2 million out-of-school children, which is the highest rate in the world. This development necessitated the creation of National Home Grown School Feeding Programme and based on its policy recommendation, the programme was designed to provide one nutritious balanced meal per each school day, to at least 5.5 million pupils in classes 1 to 3 across Nigeria public primary schools in order to mop-up the huge numbers of out-of-school children in the country, as well as solving the problem of early year malnutrition. National Cash Transfer Programme was the third component of N-SIPs and it was designed to provide targeted monthly cash transfers of N5,000 to poor and vulnerable households, with the main focus of graduating the beneficiaries out of poverty. Additional segment of this initiative was to provide continuous support, mentoring and coaching for the beneficiaries to form savings groups. Government Enterprises and Empowerment Programme was the fourth component of the N-SIPs initiative and was set up with the aim of providing micro lending to a minimum of 1.66 million businesses that operate at the bottom of the financial pyramid. The targeted business operators in this category were traders, women cooperatives, market women, enterprising youths, farmers and agricultural workers. It is not surprising that the public appraisal of these social investment programmes since establishment in the year 2016 had received both commendations and condemnations from members of the public. Meanwhile, the position of most government officials is that, the programmes had significantly produced required positive results in terms of achieving its official mandates of reducing poverty among the vulnerable Nigerians. Contrarily, the perception of the members of the general public indicated that the programmes were poorly implemented and therefore served as an avenue for corrupt Nigerian politicians to siphon the public resources, instead of genuinely tackling the current alarming rate of poverty in a sincere, transparent and sustainable way.

While all the programmes and policies have significant merit on paper, the fact remains that none singly or collectively had achieved the desirable effect to any significant and sustainable extent.

Some Approaches to Rural Development

A better understanding of the socio-political environment in Nigeria requires knowledge of certain approaches of rural development to enable government better formulate rural and urban development policies. Some of these approaches are discussed below.

Integrated Rural Development Approach: This is a very recent approach adopted by government in tackling the problems of the rural port. Integrated rural development emerged from the fact that past efforts have contributed little to improve the well-being of people, the ultimate goal of development. The integrated rural development is not denying the need for economic growth and modern technology, rather,

in addition, the strategy emphasizes the fact that the economic base in the rural areas has to be broadened through efforts to mobilize and better utilize human and natural resources by providing services; by creating motivation and purchasing power through better distribution of income and employment opportunities; by establishing closer links between the agricultural, industrial and service sector in the rural areas; and by improving the conditions of living regarding housing, water supply, roads, etc, through assistance to self-help actions.

Integrated rural development is different from general development because, as matter of policy, it places greater emphasis on the mobilization and development of human resources potential and on achieving a more equitable access to resources and fairer distribution of income. With regards to planning, integrated rural development goes beyond the agricultural sector. It embraces at the national level an overall policy conducive to achieving social improvements of the rural masses and takes up the complexity of regional area development when it comes to implementation, including aspects of administrative decentralization and people organization. As a national philosophy, the concept of integrated rural development programmes, rely heavily on the concept of regional self reliance as well as on its own efforts. A cursory look at one of Nigeria's recent policy on rural development, the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) introduced by the Babangida Administration in 1985, one could see that the policy adopted the integrated rural development approach. As it lasted, the rural poor hived a sigh of relief. Infrastructure facilities were being put in place across the country's rural and urban areas. However, researches have shown that even though DFRRI recorded major successes and achievements in the transformation of rural landscape in certain states, a number of problems were identified. Most of the major facilities supplied were not put into use as the rural dwellers did not know how to use them. Scholars have argued that at least, the people should have been educated and mobilized for some of the sensitive projects. More so, most of the routes opened were not wide enough, very muddy and poor quality roads with untarred surfaces, such untarred surfaced roads were hardly passable during the rainy seasons when vehicles get stuck in mud. The programme was also riddled with problems of misappropriation of funds which affected seriously the operation of the programme. In 1994, the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural infrastructure died a natural death.

The Humanistic Approach:

This is purely educational programme concerned with consciousness raising and empowerment. According to Ntukidem (2019), it entails the improvement of the society's capacity to understand, manage and control its environment; and merely to exploit it. It involves improving individual and group consciousness towards meaningful co-operation with other human groups for the good of all. It is to change people's attitudes, perception, and their behavior in order to achieve development. A humanistic approach to development maintains that by heightening or changing man's ability to appreciate his own endowment, we arm him with a new vision and a new tool with which to shape communal space and therefore, shape his life and his fortune. Only the type of self-consciousness that humanistic approach to development generates can bring about self-emancipation and make the rural people exert sufficient control over an environment that appears to them as given and unchangeable. In the area of changing attitude, Shanin (1968) contended that: Day by Day the peasants make the economists sigh, politicians sweat, and the strategists sweat, defeating their plans and prophecies all over the world-Moscow and Washington, Peking and Delhi.

In other words, for development programmes to be successful, the people need to be educated in order to change their attitudes towards programmes or projects. The humanistic approach requires the type of

education that awakens human consciousness to the realization of the fact that what distinguishes the rural areas from the city are not the bright lights, the paved streets, the high concentration of people, opportunities, activities and services at locations within each reach; Ntukidem (2019).

The most fundamental thing that a humanistic approach can achieve is a thorough going transformation of attitudes, beliefs and outlook towards life, not only to people in the rural, but also in the urban centres. Scholars have argued that this is the type of development that enables us to see other people and the world as a community of human individuals capable of contributing their best to societal development at all times.

In Nigeria, a number of government policies exist that fall under this approach. The creation of War Against Indiscipline (WAI) in 1984, Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reliance (MAMSER) in 1987, National orientation Movement (NOM) in 1986, and most recently, the National Rebirth Campaign (1999) and currently the National Orientation Agency, are a few among other programmes created by different governments to raise peoples' consciousness both in urban and rural areas. The concern of these programmes and policies are to educate the people to appreciate and participate in government programmes and policies. They are also aimed at attitudinal and behavioural change, setting the state for development. It is however sad to note that by and large these educational programmes only stopped at the urban centres, while the rural people are left to grope in the dark in terms of government programmes, policies and actions. Sometimes, people turn these programmes for self enrichment and therefore, money meant for the execution of projects and programmes are diverted. Government good intentions through these processes are thwarted and thus negating development programmes and actions.

NAMSER, an educational and mobilizing programme was tied Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) to help educate and mobilizing the citizenry both in urban and rural areas, but such a beautiful creation was destroyed by man's inordinate quest for wealth at the expense of the general development of the society.

Assessment of Politics and Policies of Rural Development in Nigeria

Having looked at policies and programmes for rural development in Nigeria, it would be necessary to carry out an assessment of the rural development efforts in the country and the politic involved therein. 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, 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 (2020) 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 our 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 of 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 (Nnadozie, 1986).

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 part of the country. The policy pursued by government since mid 1970s ostensibly to boost agriculture started with Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) lunched 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 (2021) 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).

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.

Factors responsible for failures of rural development policies and Programmes in Nigeria

Nigeria as a nation is peculiar because, formulation of policies and programmes does not take any government by surprise. This accounts for her numerous development plans, poverty alleviation and rural development programmes, agencies and commissions for development, etc. amidst which the anticipated changes is lacking Okoli and Onah (2006) averred that the problem in Nigeria is not about conceptualizing policies, plans, programmes and projects. Neither is it about putting down development plans... All the plans are supposed to be prosecuted through programmes and projects. In spite of all the plans and concomitant programmes and projects, there are still lamentation on the state of the socio-economic development index and widespread poverty. With all the efforts made to uplift the qualitative standard of living of the rural inhabitants in Nigeria from pre independence to post-independence, it is unfortunate to note the said situational position of the rural setting.

In view of the above comments, that rural development policies in Nigeria recorded perpetual failure due to the following reasons:

- Corruption and embezzlement of fund
- Adoption of Top-Botton Model, and
- Absence of a Reliable Database

Corruption and Embezzlement of Fund

Corruption and Embezzlement of public fund have been factors that characterized the administration of development programmes in Nigeria. According to NEEDS Document (2004), systematic corruption and low levels of transparency and accountability have been major sources of development failure. It gives forms of corruption but those that have affected the rural development programmes are: misappropriation or diversion of fund; demanding of percentages from contractors over an awarded contract (ie kick back); under and over invoicing, bribery, etc. These forms of corruption had become salient decimal in the implementation of rural development policies of every administration for over the years. Achebe (1983) posits that public funds are not routinely doled out to political allies and personal friends in the guise of contracts to execute public work of one kind another. Generally, a political contractor will have no expertise whatsoever or even the intention to perform. He will simply sell the contract to a third party and pocket the commission running into-millions for acting as a conduit of executive fiat. Alternatively he can raise cash by selling, the contract but by collecting a “mobilization fee” from the Treasury, putting aside the contract for the time being or forever. More often than not, rural development projects are always poorly implemented. Besides, scattered uncompleted projects, poor supervision and “blind acceptability of acclaimed completed projects are bane of Nigeria rural development programmes. In the view of Southbotina (2004), such degradation of social capital threatens social cohesion and renders development unsustainable.

Adoption of Top-Bottom Model

It is proverbially said that 'he who wears a shoe knows where it pinches'. The several efforts targeted at developing the rural areas by the Federal, State and Local Governments, are not yielding the envisaged results because of this major factor. Muoghalu (1992) argued thus: In an effort to develop the rural area.

Third World governments have articulated policies and adopted strategies. Unfortunately no thought has been given to the need to come up with an operational efficiency. This is the missing link and its absence has resulted in 'duplication of functions, overlapping jurisdiction; unnecessary antagonisms and the existence of 'autonomous units of government' and a polycentric development system.

Omale and Ebiloma (2005) added that one recurring factor hindering rural and urban development in Nigeria from colonial era to date is that of failure by planners to involve the people in policies, strategies and plans meant for their development. Policies and plan have always been designed and devised by government and brought down for implement in rural areas. This is the unpopular Top-Down approach, where local resources are not adequately utilized and when new techniques are forced on the rural people, they tend to show resentment and apathy to these new methods. Thus, sustainability of such development programmes and projects become difficult (Tenuche and Ogwo, 2005). Virtually, all foreign and home drawn rural development policies have fell victim of this factor. The recent one is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) made to be realized in 2015. This programme was designed in far away New York to develop Third World rural communities even without their notice to spell out felt needs. This makes the people to distance themselves from government programmes and projects as they do not see it as their own, thereby resulting in apathy. Top-Bottom Approach to rural development exercise is the bane of rural underdevelopment in Nigeria in particular and developing countries at large.

Absence of a Reliable Database

NEEDS (2004) recognized that Nigeria's national statistical system is weak. It says, the current system, managed by the Federal Office of Statistic (FOS), is governed by the 1957 Statistics Act, which is obsolete. According to Onah (2006-253), the consequence of this, is that planning for programmes/projects at various levels of government is basically done on ad hoc basic. Timely and reliable statistics according to NEEDS (2004) is critical to effective planning, monitoring, and evaluation of performance. The efficacy of rural development policies is based on an accurate data.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Considering the above 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 examples. 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 Nigeria 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.

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.

Based on the above the following recommendations have been offered:

- The rural areas should be accorded more recognition since about 75% of the population lives in the rural area.
- Enabling environment should be provided to fast tract rural development. Health and educational facilities, electricity, and improvement in the general quality of life for the rural areas.
- The seemingly institutionalized corruption, greed, mismanagement of funds and outright embezzlement associated with the institution for rural development should be nipped in the bud. Intensification of crusade against these vices by government and her agencies should be invoked.
- Political leaders in Nigeria should be sensitized to change their attitude in governance from self enriching enterprises to service oriented enterprise.
- Local farmers should be adequately trained on the use of modern technology and they should be provided with farming equipment like tractors, fertilizer, and pest control chemicals at a subsidized price to boost their agricultural activities.
- Bottom-top approach to rural development should be encourage instead of the usual top bottom approach as this will enable rural dwellers to identified their felt needs in the development process.
- There is need for adequate data of the would be direct beneficiaries of any policy or development programme as this would prevent the target beneficiaries from being deprived of development policies and programme that was meant for them.

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