

IMPACT OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION ON INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE EBONYI STATE RURAL COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Over the years particularly in a developing economy like Nigeria, the experience of unguided rural-urban drift has been a continuous one. This paper was an attempt to find out the reasons for the continued and unchecked mass movement of people and materials to urban from rural areas of Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular; ascertain the impact of such movement to the infrastructural development of Ebonyi State and; the way forward. Push-pull theory of migration propounded by Everett, S. Lee (1966) was adopted as the theoretical framework. The researcher randomly interviewed the residents of the state orally and the results of the investigation revealed that: The mere urge to move out of one's rural area to any urban city; the quest for a greener pasture for better living conditions including the search for a better employment opportunities, among others, are the reasons for the persistent rural-urban migration in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular; and the resultant effects have been the congestion of the capital city (Abakaliki), rise in unemployment rate, crimes, youth restiveness, prostitution and frequent vandalization of available urban infrastructures. A near absence of social and physical infrastructures, are common features of the greater parts of Ebonyi rural communities. The implication is the increase in hunger and poverty as a result of the decline in agricultural population and other productive ventures in the rural areas. It is recommended that, Nigerian and Ebonyi State government in particular, should adopt a long term development plan of "Rural-Urban Integration (RUBAIN)", to open up the rural areas.

Key words: Impact, Rural-Urban Migration, Infrastructure Development, Communities, Experience, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

0.1 Introduction

Since time immemorial, the relationship between migration and development of any type has remained a topical issue under serious academic debate and as such, the movement of people from one settlement to another, apparently in search of a better life is not a novel phenomenon. Experiences have however shown that what is commonly obtainable is the increasing voluntary movement and perceived forceful movement of people of low-skill and low-wage as well as high-skill and high-wage from less developed rural areas to a more developed urban areas, (Jacob, 2007). The truth is that, throughout all ages, migration, which is the movement of people, animals and even goods from one place to another, has been in existence. And that is why Hall (2010) posits that migration has been a key human response to environmental, social, political, economic and structural changes. According to United Nations (1982), migration is a form of geographical mobility between one geographical unit and another generally involving a change of residence from the place of departure to the place of destination. Migration apart from giving us the knowledge of the development of human civilization, show us the pattern of human existences, help us understand complex structural changes like physical infrastructure and also give us a way to ensure the future survival of human race.

Rural-urban migration is a form of internal migration which means a movement within a country. It refers to the movement of people from the countryside respectively the rural areas into the cities, often the metropolitan cities of a country (Madu, 2012). When this happens, there is the tendency that it will cause urbanization, urban growth and a neglect of the affected area (rural) in terms of infrastructural concentration. In the words of Olowe and Awoyemi (2012), “the greater the concentration of people in an area the greater the concentration of infrastructural facilities and development projects in such an area”. The implication overtime according to them is that the area of destination gains population whereas the other side respectively the area of origin loses people. This fact must always be borne in mind since interaction, networking and communication between both sides are absolutely necessary in trying to achieve a balanced development, at least, infrastructural, of both rural and urban areas.

Available literature have indicated that there are different reasons (push and pull factors) that cause rural-urban migration the world over. The push factors according to Ezenwaji (2002) like poor living conditions, famine, unemployment, war and conflict, etc, force people out of rural areas while the quest for higher incomes, better housing, better employment, better health care and schools, are among the pull factors that attract migrants to urban areas.

Orji (2007) lamented that most rural communities in Nigeria are in a deplorable state of affairs as there are a near absence of social amenities or infrastructures. He argued that the initial government's thinking not to site them because of small population make them to even think more not to site or maintain any if available as there is no corresponding revenue from them, but this has rather caused avoidable havocs in the urban centres.

Infrastructure which is regarded as social overhead capital by many development economists is indispensable if any development target was to be achieved in any economy such as urbanization, industrialization, export promotion, equitable income distribution and sustainable economic development. The presence or absence of the needed infrastructure, to a large extent, determines the actual development of the area concerned.

It should be noted that infrastructure are many and diverse: roads, tunnels, electricity, schools, markets, bridges, railways, airports, harbors, canals, dams, irrigation networks, water pipes, water purification plants, water treatment plants, dumps and incinerators, power plants, power lines and distribution networks, oil and gas pipe lines, telephone exchanges and networks, district heating equipment, etc. (Remy, 2004).

Ebonyi State seems to parade the highest number of primitive rural communities in the country with little or no infrastructural facilities. This is due to the fact that, while no community/society develops in isolation, the experience in many rural communities in the state is quite pathetic because the common experience is the continuous mass exodus of youths from their respective rural areas to the capital city (Abakaliki town) or other cities around the globe. The common reason has been to search for a better greener pasture. More worrisome too, is the fact that, while Ebonyi people migrate to settle in other states' rural areas, the same experience is not always being noticed in its territory and the reason is not always far-fetched; nothing to attract them. Although an average thinker may want to posit that there is no universally valid evidence possible about the question of who migrate most, but still, the migration decision has shown to be somehow selective in many society. A visit to some nearly deserted Ebonyi State villages will convince one of the issues being argued about.

Government seem to be less concerned about the state of infrastructural facilities in most Ebonyi communities and it is the thrust of this paper to address some of the nagging issues including, ascertaining

the immediate and remote causes and consequences of rural-urban migration in Ebonyi State; and the impacts of such factors to infrastructural development, with a view to making recommendations.

0.2 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

0.2.1 Migration and Rural-Urban Migration

Defining migration (especially internal migration) is a controversial activity and this is because, at one end of the spectrum, migration is defined as the movement of people over some distance (or at least, from one “migration defining area” to another) and from one “usual place of residence” to another. At the other end of the spectrum, the definition of migration discards the requirements that migration must involve a change of residence and a move across some distance, (Kok, 1999). He noted that no matter how daunting defining migration might be, the central points remain that it involves movement and it has both “distance” and “time” dimensions. Simply defined, migration is the crossing of a spatial boundary by one or more persons involved in a change of residence. Rural-urban migration on the other hand is the movement of people from rural to urban areas (Orji, 2007).

Writing on the type of migration, Ezenwaji (2002) noted that migration properly refers to the transfer or movement of people from one territory to another, divided into two distinctive forms: seasonal migration and one-way permanent movement. Seasonal migration according to her is dependent on season, example, pastoral and agricultural people. One-way permanent migration is a type of movement that occurs when people seek innovation and new ways of life or as a result of trying to preserve their culture. This type of migration can be motivated by a lot of factors including: wars, flood and so on.

For Odega (2001), the types of migration include internal migration which refers to a change of residence within national boundaries such as between states, provinces, cities or municipalities and; international migration which refers to change of residence over national boundaries.

Contrary to the foregoing, Weinstein and Pillai (2001) have given a third classification: forced migration which exists when a person is moved against his will (slave), or when the move is initiated because of external factors (natural disaster or civil war).

Whatever the classification of migration is dependent upon many factors or reasons according to Ajaero and Madu (2014). They include:

- 1) **Natural Disasters:** Floods, famines, droughts, earthquake, etc.
- 2) **Physical conditions:** Climate, soils, relief could additionally be responsible for the migration of individuals, especially when such conditions are unfavourable.
- 3) **Insecurity:** Worry of insecurity arising from war, political instability etc, may make individuals migrate.
- 4) **Differences in economic opportunities:** As a result of these, folks tend to migrate to where there are more economic opportunities like jobs and business transactions.
- 5) **Change in standing:** Example; high level of education and wealth, might make individuals to migrate from rural to urban centres.

Factors responsible for any type of migration are commonly referred by many as “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors are those factors that force people for instance, out of rural areas, e.g. economic push

factors like unemployment or underemployment, low wages and non-economic factors like poor rural infrastructure in general, poor living conditions referring to housing, education possibilities and health care, electricity, roads, pipe borne water, communication network, etc. (Madu, 2002).

The pull factors include social factors that attracts people to move into the cities which are mainly the counterparts of the push factors like better employment, higher wages in the cities because of high labour demand (economic pull factors) and the non-economic pull factors as better housing, healthcare, education, urban facilities (steady light, water) etc (Nwajiuba, 2005).

Whatever the factor necessitating migration has some significant effects both on the place of migrant's origin and destination. To this, Azam and Gubert (2005) stated that rural-urban migration results to overwhelming concentration of the greater percentage of a common wealth, assets, purchasing capacity, economic activities, and variety of services in the urban centres as well as the continued neglect and degradation of the rural areas. Although they also appear to suggest that rural-urban migration is a welcome development when they assert that, it is a survival strategy utilized by the rural poor to uplift their standard.

For Madu (2012), migration of whatever dimension, acts as a catalyst in the transformation process of not only the destiny of individual migrants but also the conditions of family members left behind and their local communities. He went further to state that one significant source of development for the rural populace as a result of this increasing drift towards the urban centres is remittances. By this he meant that rural-urban migrants send remittances (goodies) to their relatives in the rural areas and the remittance-receiving households use the remittances for many purposes. Secondly, these rural-urban migrants execute various rural development projects in their rural areas of origin as they form rural community associations with differing nomenclatures for the purposes of uplifting their standards individually and collectively.

Ajaero and Madu (2014) lament that rural-urban drift cause rural depopulation and this causes a lot of problems in terms of rural development as the young, skilled adults are missing. Implicit in the foregoing scholarly submissions is that rural-urban migration can have both positive and negative effects to both the place of origin of the migrant and to the receiving destination. This is because an average migrant who is attracted to the urban centre easily thinks that he will have better opportunities to work there. Indeed, for some of them, life becomes better and living conditions improved. However, a lot of migrants end up becoming more impoverished as the experiences of insufficient sanitary conditions, substandard housing, and growth of slums, air pollution, congestion, crime and insecurity become the order of the day.

0.2.2 Infrastructural Development

Infrastructure according to Online Etymology Dictionary has been used in English since 1887 and in France since 1875, originally meaning “the installations that form the basis of any operation or system. Infrastructure is the basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society like industries, building, electricity, roads, bridges, hospital and health services, governance and so on (Oyedele, 2012). It is the enterprise or the products, services and facilities necessary for an economy to function (Sullivan and Sheffrin, 2003). Infrastructure can be described generally as the set of interconnected structural elements that provide framework supporting an entire structure of development. It is the means of achieving an objective or set of objectives and it is used in judging whether an area, community or country is developed (Oyedele, 2012).

Infrastructure are many and varied but typically, it is the technical structure that support a society, example; water supply, roads, electricity, telecommunications, etc. Functionally, infrastructure facilitates the production of goods and services and for distribution of finished products to the end-users (markets), Fulmer (2009).

Oyedele (2012) observed that there are two types of infrastructure: “hard and soft”. While hard is the large physical network necessary for the functioning of a modern industrial nation, soft infrastructure refers to all the institutions which are necessary to maintain the economic, health and cultural standards of a country such as the financial system, the education system, etc.

02.3 The State of Infrastructure in Ebonyi Rural Communities

Like most rural communication in Nigeria, the nature of infrastructure in Ebonyi communities is nothing to write home about. Up till now, a good number of families in these communities still live in unventilated houses (thatched). And as Agbola, 1998; Ajanlekoko, 2001; Nubi, 2001; and Oyedele, 2006, observe, “more than 70% of rural infrastructure in Nigeria, if available, are now decayed and need serious repairs or replacements.

Onibokun (1996) had expressed dismay that our government that plans, organizes, controls and supervises the people to ensure that they live in as decent lives as possible, has done little or nothing to that effect. It (government) rather concentrates greater percentage of these life-changing amenities in towns and cities where population is much or where probably, they erroneously think that they are mostly needed.

The African Development Bank (ADB) has made infrastructure development a cornerstone in its development agenda with regional member countries (TMSA, 2012). The bank recognizes that lack of adequate social, physical and economic infrastructure is one of the key constraints to short and medium term poverty reduction in Africa. Availability of infrastructure not only enhances healthy life style, but creates employment, reduces crime and boost the aesthetics of the area concerned (Nubi, 2001). Well developed and efficient infrastructure is very vital for the economic well-being of a given geography and helps optimally in social integration.

The development of infrastructure in any developing society has not gone without a quite number of noticeable hurdles or challenges. Some of them according to Agbola (1998) are:

- a. Lack of visionary leaders who can work with imagination, insight and boldness. Visionary leaders are change agents and Nigeria has few of such agents.
- b. Corruption: Many people today in Nigeria believe that the commonest problem of anything is corruption. Corruption does not only raise the prices of infrastructure, but reduce the quality, quantity and economic returns and the anti-corruptions agencies have done less to ameliorate the tide. Others include lack of maintenance culture that is characteristic of Nigerians, project abandonment, political instability.

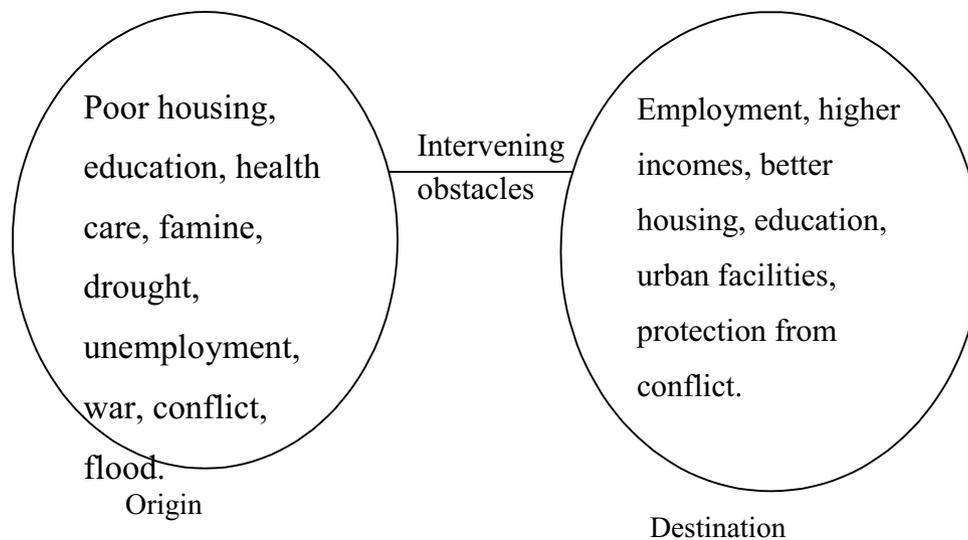
0.3 Methodology/Theoretical Explication

Apart from orally interviewing residents randomly in different rural communities across Ebonyi state that allowed for on the spot assessment of the issue under investigation by the researcher, relevant literatures were reviewed (content wise).

Everett, S. Lee (1966)'s push-pull theory, was adopted as the theoretical framework. According to him, the motivation to migrate from place of origin to the place of destination are affected by push factors that exist at the point of origin and act to trigger emigration; these include lack of economic opportunities, political persecution, among others (Orji, 2007). The pull factors exist at the destination and include the availability of jobs, religious or political freedom and the perception of relatively conducive environment (Oyedele, 2012). In the opinion of Nubi (2001), pushes and pulls are complementary as according to him, migration can only occur if the reason to emigrate (the push) is remedied by the corresponding pull at an attainable destination. He submitted that the number of migrants is directly proportional to the number of opportunities at a given place and inversely proportional to the number of intervening obstacles. Therefore, the volume of migration from one place to another is associated not only with the distance between places and number of people in the two places, but also with the number of opportunities or obstacles between each place.

The logic of the push-pull theory is that if the pluses (pulls) at the destination outweigh the pluses of staying at the origin, then migration is likely to occur.

Lee's Push-Pull Theory



Source: Based on Lee (1966).

This theory is relevant in that it will uncover to the government of Ebonyi State, the factors prompting massive rural-urban drift and the best strategy to curtail the tide.

Findings/Results/Discussion

In the course of the investigation, the following findings were made:

- 1) The reasons for rural-urban migration especially among the youths in Ebonyi State vary. Although, the greater number of them is as a result of poverty of the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing, others are due to personal considerations like the need to be a traveler for the sake of not being taken for granted at home, socio-economic circumstances like better trading, art craft, employment, and higher education, among others.

- 2) Access to the current issues and information technology: Most rural communities in Ebonyi State have no mobile telecommunication networks and thus, hinder effective social interaction and issues relating to matters arising. These factors force/push people out of their original residences. Computers and other modern technological gadgets are rarely seen and used in the villages and so, the youths have no reasons to stay.
- 3) Apparent lack of or inadequate physical and social infrastructures: Most rural villages in Ebonyi State are located near the riverine areas that are usually flooded during the raining season. This makes it difficult if not impossible for the people to even transport their agricultural produce for which most of them are known for, from their places of production to places of need (towns/cities). This helps in adding to their disillusionment. The schools particularly the basic primary and secondary, in their sorry states are with little or no buildings, teachers and teaching aids. The social stigma of studying in such an area becomes the push factor for those who can afford to move out. There are no standard hospitals, markets, roads and even electricity for people to engage in entrepreneurship ventures like barbing, tailoring, vulcanizing, and the likes. Since nothing tangible is being done in that regard, the people have no need than to travel to the cities where those foregoing amenities are available.
- 4) Most rural villages are ghost of themselves as youths who are still in their prime ages have deserted the places in search of greener pastures.
- 5) Ebonyi State government's efforts at developing the rural areas are still very far from being enough as the efforts and attention are concentrated at developing the capital city. No government's ministry, department or agency even that of agriculture, local government and chieftaincy matters is located in the rural areas.

Conclusion

Rural-urban migration and the challenges of infrastructural development in Ebonyi State is no longer a novel phenomenon. Government has either deliberately neglected the rural areas or has lacked the political road map to bridge the challenge. The state of the rural infrastructure in Ebonyi State is better thought than imagined and good governance seem to be the only antidote that can bridge the gap between rural and urban areas. The implication is that true development in Ebonyi state will continue to be a mirage if nothing urgent was done.

Recommendations

In view of the findings and implication of the study as regards to rural-urban migration in Ebonyi State, the following findings are therefore timely: Rural-Urban Integration (RUBAIN): This is a long term development strategy that will enable the government to adopt a radical and multi-faceted approach to development. To do this as a takeoff initiative, government should immediately embark on aggressive and sincere rural electrification, water supply, and road construction. This will encourage skill development through entrepreneurship (hand work) and self-employment.

On the long-run, a well-thought-out development plan of relocating most of the government's ministries, departments, agencies and parastatals to rural areas will finally curtail the avoidable rural-urban drift. Also, annexes at least, part time programmes of Ebonyi State University should be relocated to some rural villages in the state to decongest the capital city (Abakaliki).

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