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Issues, Challenges and Prospects in Rural Development Processes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Over the years, rural development has contributed immensely to the development of man and his environment. Rural development is the *process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural* areas. The main objective of this paper is to examine the emerging challenges in rural development as well as rural development processes in Nigeria that impede sustainable rural development in the country. The occurrence of these problems and challenges not only impose detrimental effects upon the living conditions of the individuals, but also impose barriers within the course of their progression. The major problems that have been identified are, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, homelessness and crime and violence. Illiteracy is when individuals do not possess the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and numeracy. Due to lack of literacy skills, they certainly experience problems in the implementation of tasks and activities. In achieving its objective, the paper clarified the concept of development and rural development as postulated by various scholars. It examines the modernization and dependency theoretical underpinning of the concepts. The study analyses secondary and empirical sources of data through qualitative methods. The paper posits that the rural areas have constituted majority of the nation's population and serve as a base for food production. The paper argues that though various rural development policies have been initiated in Nigeria, the conditions of the rural areas has not changed much since independence. Rather, development policies in Nigeria have been tilted toward the urban areas while the rural areas live in extreme poverty and lack basic health, educational and social infrastructures. It identifies emerging challenges such as corruption and mismanagement of resources, poor policy implementation, famers- herders conflicts and lack of autonomy of the local governments. The study also provided the way forward by recommending more concerted efforts in implementing rural developments projects, punishment of corrupt public officials, effective budget monitoring, provision of security and conflict resolution mechanisms and participation of the rural populace in development projects. Therefore, in order to alleviate these problems and enhance the

livelihoods opportunities of rural individuals, there have been formulation of measures and programs that have the main objective of promoting well-being of rural individuals.

Keywords: Challenges, Emerging, Development, Processes, Rural, Illiteracy, Poverty, Problems, Rural Areas, Rural Development, Unemployment

Introduction

Rural development involves efforts that are economic and social in nature intended to encourage concepts of retention, growth, and expansion in areas outside cities, including improving quality of life for rural residents through such activity. *It is the development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas* **.**One of the basic role of a society is to be able to reconstruct and build its own capacities and harness its resources to facilitate development that would improve the lives of people in both urban and rural areas. The need for active rural development policies have become imperative in addressing development issues as three quarters of the world impoverished live in the rural areas (Takeuchi, 2001; World Bank, 2001; Akpan, 2012; UN, 2018;).Many governments in developing countries have been shifting attention to rural development to reduce the poverty levels in the rural areas and resultant excessive population influxes in urban areas in search for safety nest. Likewise, since Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, focus on rural development has remained a preoccupation of successive governments in the country (UJo, 1994; Haruna, 2000; Teukachi, 2001; Oruonye, 2013). Though Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and material resources including rich deposits of minerals, wide arable land, and water bodies, the condition of the rural areas in the country portrays a gloomy situation despite these rich resources. The urban based process of development in Nigeria had marginalized and impoverished the rural areas since the colonial era and encouraged massive rural to urban migration. The lop-sided pattern of development during the colonial era was also sustained in the post-colonial era particularly with he discovery and production of crude oil as the major source of revenue in the country. Consequently, the quest for improving the quality of life and enhancing the economic capacity of the rural dwellers who formed majority of Nigeria's population had been jeopardized. Most of the rural population have extremely limited access to schools, health centers and safe drinking water (Olatubonsun; 1975; Muoghalu, 1992; Shut; 2001; Akpan, 2012; Yahaya, 2019).

The rural areas in Nigeria constituted a bulk of the Nation's population with about total of 80.7% in 1963, 70.13% in 1985, 69% in the 90's 51% in 2011 and 49.9 % in 2018 (Mugohalu, 1992; UN, World bank, 2011; 2017). Due to their engagement in primary activities that from the foundation for economic development, the rural areas in Nigeria also serve as a base for food production, a major market for domestic manufacturers and sources of capital formation for the country (Haruna, 2000; Yakubu et al, 2010). Despite this importance attached to the rural areas, they are not attractive to live and are mostly characterized by low standards of living, absence of infrastructure such as electricity,

good roads and health facilities, illiteracy, malnutrition, wide spread diseases and low life expectancy.

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas. Karim and Hashemi(2010) in their study concluded that the main obstacles to rural development are, social environment (including unemployment and high population growth, high rates of migration, adult illiteracy, low life expectancy, poor nutritional status and lack of appropriate health facility), ecological etc. For this reason, successive governments in Nigeria have introduced rural development programmes aimed at alleviating the problems of the rural areas. Such programmes include the National Accelerated Food Production Programmes 1973, The Procurement and Distribution of Fertilizer Projects in 1973, The Integrated Rural Development Programmes 1975, Operation Feed the Nation, 1976, the Green Revolution, 1980, the River Basin and Rural Development Infrastructures 1986, National Agency for Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) 2000 and National Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) at the national, state and local level.

However, the efforts made by Government through various programmes and institutions have not succeeded in bringing about the needed development especially to the rural areas. The condition in the rural areas has continued deteriorating with continued drift to urban areas. This has constricted the drive towards balanced national economic development as such is would not be attained unless there is an efficient improvement in the development of rural areas (Shut,2001; Raj, 2005; Oruonye, 2013

The paper analyzes the extent to which the government in Nigeria has mobilized its resources and provided its dividends towards the development of the rural areas. It also identifies the current emerging challenges for rural developments in Nigeria and its implications for sustainable development in the country.

RURAL ISSUES

The Three Rural Issues, or San Nong (simplified Chinese: traditional Chinese: pinyin: *sān nóng*), are three issues relating to rural development in mainland China: agriculture, rural areas and farmers. The name "Three Rural Issues" were highlighted by CCP general secretary Hu Jintao and Chinese premier Wen Jiabao as areas of rural development in China that need work. At the 2006 National People's Congress, the Three Rural Issues were especially emphasized throughout Wen Jiabao's speech on the workings of the government in 2005 and the direction of the government for the year 2006. In the rural areas, agricultural reforms had made the peasants better-off until the 1990s when land supply became insufficient and the cost of the means of production was soaring. As a result, the income of the peasants was greatly reduced. Today, the "three problem of peasantry, rural areas and agriculture" are still a major concern of the government.

- **Agricultural issues** : The main problem is agricultural production and operation, specifically how to achieve agricultural industrialization. This is mainly due to the low degree of marketability of agricultural production and operation and the high volatility of agricultural prices; the fact that agricultural production mainly relies on small-scale farmers, making it difficult to obtain economies of scale; and the fact that the issue of food security has never been neglected.
- **Rural issues** : It is concentrated in the urban-rural dichotomy caused by the household registration system, with a large difference in economic and cultural levels

between urban and rural areas. The image is likened to China's City like Europe, The countryside is like Africa.

- **Farmers' issues** : The main problems are the low income of farmers, the large gap between urban and rural incomes, the low overall cultural quality of farmers and the lack of protection of farmers' Rights, etc.

"The countryside is the cradle of the Chinese nation, agriculture is the foundation of the national economy, and farmers are our bread and butter. If we lose these three, we will also lose the foundation of our nation".

EMERGING RURAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

About one in every five people in the world live in extreme poverty (1.2 billions people) and more than 900 million people suffer from under nutrition. Poverty is predominantly rural. Three quarters of the worlds' poor live in rural areas where they are mainly involved on agriculture and related activities. So poverty target goals can't be achieved unless address rural poverty. In most developing countries agriculture is the largest employer and revenue creator. For this reason agriculture remains even in 21st century a critical sector for economic development and poverty reduction as well as for environmental sustainability. This key role is also highlighted by the fact that high and volatile food prices and weak economic growth in most developing countries could determine a falling into poverty for other 250 million people. It is now widely recognized that subsidies and protectionist trade policies of the industrialized countries are damaging for developing countries. Industrialized countries' export subsidies also caused distortions in the domestic markets of developing countries creating difficulties for local producers. International and national policies affect the ability of poor countries to use the power of agriculture to stimulate growth and reduce poverty. Researchers have to produce continue efforts to analyze global agricultural trade reform and to suggest new options of reforming agricultural trade for developing countries.

Agricultural and rural development in developing countries must be founded on higher productivity of small-scale farmers. A more efficient access to land, water, technology, financial resources and other institutions that support poor farmers is fundamental. At the same time, the improvement of transport and communication infrastructure, storage facilities, crop processing technologies and marketing solutions are needed to face the new market environment. Also the adoption of horizontal mechanisms of integration represents an important challenge for small-scale farmers to entry effectively domestic and international markets. Climate change significantly affects the rural poor who mainly depend on agriculture and fishery. Studies on the mitigation and adaptation of the impacts of climate change have strategic relevance. In this context main fields of research are represented by: the analysis of impacts of climate change on agriculture productivity and food security, the adaptation options for agriculture and natural resources, the adaptation differences across different farming systems and landscapes. Taking into account these aspects the broad theme of relationships between agriculture and natural resources is gaining increasing importance. Specific issues in this context are represented by: the governance of natural resources, the trade-offs between resources, the improving of management practices, the support of sustainable production processes.

Again, lively rural economies are fundamental to eradicating poverty in rural communities and to support economic growth in poor countries. On this basis emerging rural development issues are also represented by: the increase of multi-functional and multi-spatial livelihoods in the rural space with the consequence that the support of the non-farm rural economy is as important as agricultural support; the new challenges faced by small-holder farming in less-favoured areas; a technological targeting more location specific; a rethinking of institutional capacity and governance; the mitigation measures for rural risks and vulnerability; the rethinking and revival of aid modalities.

The rural environment is continuously changing, the development thinking is changing and rural development policies need of systematic adaptations. These are the core messages and the new challenges the idea is launching to researchers, specialists and scholars to support the improvement of knowledge in so critical issues for the future of the world.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Development

An understanding of the concept of development is relevant in explaining rural development. (Olaide, 1984) defined development as rapid increase in per capital output, attendant shift in technology and demographic character of the society. Similarly, Hornby (2000) and Abba et al (2006) opined that development means a planned growth or change. Their definitions emphasize the growth of a society so that it becomes better. A limitation of this paradigm is that a society likein the case of Nigeria has experienced growth in per capital out and technology but still records high levels of unemployment, malnutrition, poor health care facilities, dilapidated infrastructure and worse of all a dependent socio-economic orientation that relies on importation. Other scholars argued that development is both a qualitative and quantitative change. According to Seers (1969), development should mean the transformation of the social and economic structures institutions, processes and relationships in a society. He added that the level of inequality, poverty and unemployment should have declined over a period for development to occur in country. Gana (1986) asserted that development concerns the capacity and creative ability 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 forces. This paper will adopt the definition of development by Alanana (2005) who opined that development involves changes in structure, composition and performance of the forces of production as well as qualitative improvement in the living standards of the people through the eradication of poverty, hunger, squalor and social deprivation. From the forgoing, a country desirous of development should have the capacity and ability to harness the material and human resources at its disposal to improve the living conditions of its people on as sustainable basis.

CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

These include;

- **Poor land tenure system**
- **Low level of irrigation farming**
- **Climate change and**
- **Land degradation**.

Others are low technology, high production cost and poor distribution of inputs, limited financing, high post-harvest losses and poor access to markets.

Between January and March 2021, the agriculture contributed to 22.35 percent of the total Gross Domestic Product. (https://www.statista.com/statistics/1165865/contribution-of-oil-sector-to-gdp-in-nigeria/). Over 70 percent [1] of Nigerians engage in the agriculture sector mainly at a subsistence level.

Despite the contribution to the economy, Nigeria's agricultural sector faces many challenges which impact on its productivity. These include; poor land tenure system, low level of irrigation farming, climate change and land degradation. Others are low technology, high production cost and poor distribution of inputs, limited financing, high post-harvest losses and poor access to markets.

RURAL AREAS

The concept of rural areas varies from place to place. Olisa et al (1992) opined that that population is the major characteristics differentiating rural from urban areas. For instance, in Japan, rural areas are defined based on the population density indicating an area "other than an area with 5,000 people which consist of each district with a population density of 4,000 per square meter.

However, since the definition cannot be applied to other less populated countries, rural areas are also described as areas where majority of the residents are engaged in agriculture (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2002). Other factors such as types of occupation, settlement patterns, and level of economic, social and political participation are also considered in defining rural areas. Harris (1982) stated that rural areas relates to places that have a relatively low population density where agriculture dominates the landscape and economy, provision of social service is difficult and where transport and communication need to cover relatively large distances. Bogoro (2009) defined rural areas in Nigeria as centers of deprivation where life is devoid of opportunities and choices and an environment lacking in infrastructural facilities including roads, water supply and sanitation, energy communication facilities etc. Olaide, (1984); Raj, (2005) and Oruonye, (2013) asserted that major characteristics of rural areas in Nigeria are; large lands for agriculture, low population density, little or no technology, large number of small scale producers, labor intensive and subsistence farming, high poverty levels, and predominantly illiterate population. Scholars have also conceptualized rural areas in different perspectives. The modernization theorists view rural areas as being traditional and primitive.

According to them, the major obstacle to progress and development in rural areas are internal, most especially their adherence or affiliation to culture. For instance, Rostow, (1960) and Lipset (1967) argued that economic conditions in rural and traditional areas are heavily determined by the cultural and social values in that given society. They stated that while modernization might deliver violent or radical changes, it is worth the price. The dependency school on its part argues that the main problem in rural areas is the "modern "but not beneficial externally imposed economic constraints of capitalism (Smith, 1979). For the dependency theorists, just as the urban areas in developing countries is built to serve the interest of the Western capitals so does rural areas in the developing countries serve to protect the interest of the urban areas in their respective countries (Muzaale, 1987; Binswager-Mkhize and Mcalla, 2009). However, there is a consensus among the different perspectives about the need for improvement in rural living condition and the standard of the rural populace.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural development like development had no unanimity of definition and has been perceived from different viewpoints and theoretical models such as the modernization approach, mobilization approach, dependency perspective or bottom tom approach. The World Bank in 1975 defined rural development as a strategy aimed at improvement of the economic and social living conditions, focusing on a specific group of people in a rural area. This is to assist the poorest group among the people living in rural areas to benefit from. Mabonguje (1980) posit that rural development is the improvement of the living standards of the low-income people living in the rural areas on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the socio-spatial structures of their productive activities. It implies a broad reorganization and mobilization of the rural masses and resources to enhance the capacity of the rural populace to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with the consequent changes. (Malcom (2003) referred to rural development as the process of improving the quality of life and economic wellbeing of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. According to Alanana (2005), rural development could be regarded as a process in which a set of technological, socio-cultural and institutional measures are implemented with or for the inhabitants of rural areas with the aim of improving their socio-economic status or living condition to achieve a balance between the local and national sectors. Idris (2011) views rural development as a continued set of actions by government agencies, NGO's and the rural populace in improving the rural conditions of the rural people and a process which leads to series of changes within the confine of a given rural setting which eventually result in the improvement in the general living conditions of the rural dwellers.

Rural development had also been used synonymously with increased agricultural input and productivity. This was the major orientation of the colonial effort at rural development in Nigeria. Muagbalu (1992) argued that the colonial philosophy of the British saw the rural areas as the enclaves for agricultural production by insisting that there are few non- agricultural occupations in the rural third world. This perspective therefore suggested that modernization of the rural areas through the adoption of basic production techniques such as mechanized system of production in the agrarian sector is a requirement for rural development. He also opined that agricultural development and rural development is aimed at achieving the same goal of uplifting the rural poor. In support of this view, Idike, (1991) opines that the main concern of rural development is the modernization of the rural, sector through a transition from traditional isolation to integration with national economy.

This view was opposed by Neo-Marxist scholars such as Offiong (1980), Ake (1980) who posited

that Nigeria's ruling class and wealthy business men made their money off the backs of the poor famers in the rural areas through the marketing boards device and by serving as compradors to the Multinational Corporations in the colonial and post-colonial who are in firm control of the economy and dictate the manner and pace of the country's development. According to Marugba (1984), rural development is an issue contemplated on the desk of urban based planners who think the real function of the rural society is to produce agricultural products and maintain the urban system. He further opines that the skewed relationship between the urban and rural population has been the attitude under which first western cultures exploited rural societies, and now the same attitude prevails in developing countries including Nigeria. This point was corroborated by Ujo (1994) who asserted that the urban/rural divide

emerged in Nigeria because of a deliberate policy pursued by the British Colonial Masters who concentrated all developmental activities in the urban areas. From the above definitions and theoretical perspectives, rural development is for improving the living standards and basic needs of the rural people. Therefore, all rural development efforts must be derived from the needs and aspirations of the rural population and not essentially in response to the needs of the urban political economy.

CHALLENGES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Rural communities face challenges related to

- **Demographic changes**
- **Workforce development,**
- **Capital access**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Health**
- **Land use and**
- **Environment and community preservation**

METHODOLOGY

The data used in the research were obtained through secondary and empirical sources. The data was analysed qualitatively through content analysis to critically explain the trends and patterns of development in Nigeria and its current challenges.

OVERVIEW OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN NIGERIA

Rural Development in the Pre-Colonial Period The current poor condition of rural areas in Nigeria reflects years of cumulative policy neglect, faulty programme planning and halfhearted approach to implementing rural based programmes.

The history of rural neglect in Nigeria dates to the colonial period as the British colonial Government had no systematic programme on rural development. Rather its overall policy direction focused on the extraction of surpluses from the hinterlands to feed the imperial industries located oversees (Rodney, 1976, Onimode, 1981; UJo, 1994; Nwaezike, 2009; Akpan, 2012;). This practice reelected the British colonial policy which emphasized the search and exploitation of less expensive human and material resources to develop the British colonial empire while resources in the rural areas was used to develop the new developing cities

One of the common trend of rural development programmes during the pre-independence period was the emphasis on agricultural development and productivity. Rural development was synonymous with agriculture and the rural areas were only available areas for production of raw materials such as cocoa, palm oil, cotton and groundnuts for exports. They were also regarded as food production centers for the urban areas and the colonialist. Consequently, the policy choice of the colonialists was focused on the building of hard infrastructural facilities such as rail roads, water and markets to create easy access into the rural farms to evacuate the produce to the coastal ports while developmental facilities were concentrated in the urban areas (Williams, 1980; Ujo,1994; Nnadozie, 1986; Akpan, 2012). In this perspective, rural development programs became incidental rather than being cohesive and integrated What could be considered as a deliberate rural development initiative during the colonial era was the enactment of Welfare Act in 1945, the Cocoa Marketing Board in 1947 and other

Marketing Boards for palm oil, cotton and groundnuts in 1949. However, the Marketing Boards served to protect the interest of the colonial governments and enhanced the exploitation of local resources which further impoverished the rural areas through high taxation and commodity price distortion. The high tax revenue accruing from the rural communities did not also correspond with then low expenditure devoted for its development. Since the private sector in the colonial era was dominated by the British, resources in the rural areas were mobilized for British Capital accumulation (Onimode, 1981; Olaide, 1984; Nnadozie, 1986; Iwuagwu, 2006).

"Thus Onimode (1981) observed that the rural dwellers, impoverished by multiple taxation, broken by colonial police and court repression and submerged in a culture of silence through illiteracy were the most brutally exploited by the savage colonialism of the British. Unfortunately, the situation of the rural eras did not radically change after independence from the British rule. The lop-sided pattern of development and exploitative policies was sustained in the post-colonial era.

Rural development in the Post-Independence Period and the Military Era With the transition to independence, Nigeria was therefore faced with a serious problem of bridging the developmental gap between the urban and rural areas. Hence conscious steps were
taken to promote rural development. At various stages, government adopted strategies to improve the economic and social life of the citizens especially the rural poor. For instance, the First National Development Plan (1962-1968), the second National Development Plan (1970-1974), Third National Development Plan (1975-1980), Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985) and the First National Rolling Plan (1990-1992) were conscious attempts by Government to bring about rapid development in the country (UJo, 1994; Shut, 2001; Nwaezike, 2009; Yahaya, 2019). Even up to the early 1980s, policy understanding and direction on what should be 'rural areas' and how its development should be catalysed was narrowly focused on agricultural improvement and productivity. Aside the National development plans, many agriculturally based programs including the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1976;
Green Revolution in the Second Republic; The Large-Scale Irrigation Programmes among others(Ujo, 1994; Haruna, 2000; Raj, 2005; Yahaya, 2019). Self-sufficiency in food was the main aim of many of the projects. Therefore, emphasis on agricultural development could be justified based on the role and importance of agriculture at various levels in the Nigerian economy. While huge amounts of money from the government and World Bank were allocated for these programs, the objectives to large extent were not realized and the results of the projects did not improve the plight of the rural areas. For instance, the world Bank Research on wheat, maize and rice Large Scale Irrigation Programs revealed that neither the production of wheat or rice increased even though the government invested heavily in subsidies for famers.

Also, many peasants farmers were enforced to move from their land because of the construction of land for the irrigation programs. Some of the Agricultural programs also caused corruption such as illegal allocation of land and subsidized fertilizers (Nnadozie, 1986; World Bank, 1986; Shut, 2001; Takeuchi, 2001; Solliom, 2009). Most of the programmes failed to record the desired impacts on the rural areas because of policy reversals, lack of touch with grass roots, corrupt practices, political interference and the overbearing influence of Eurocentric ideas in policy documents. Efforts towards rural development in Nigeria began getting some significant attention from the late 1980s, when a holistic look was taken of rural development by subsequent policies, programs and regimes (Gana, 1986; Filani, 1993; UJo,1994 Akpan 2012). According to Filani, (1993), there was some improvement in the

conception of what constituted rural development during the late 1980's and early 1990's. In this case, rural development and policies and projects were and conceived in a way that transcended mere agricultural development to incorporate the development of and expansion of rural infrastructures, emphasis on poverty alleviation and socio-economic empowerment of rural areas. The pioneering effort in the change of policy and rural development practice started during the military regime headed by General Ibrahim Babangida when the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was established in 1986 to provide feeder roads, rural water supply and electrification in the rural areas. Other complimentary programs were the Directorate for National Employment (NDE), the Better Life for Rural Women and the Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery MAMSER. However DFRRI was more comprehensive and focused on alleviating rural infrastructural development(Filani, 1993; Muagbalu, 1992;Chuba, 1997;)

The Directorate was a quasi-ministerial agency saddled with the following responsibilities; To improve the quality of life of living of majority of the people in the rural areas by making it progressively wider for a range and variety of goods and services to be produced and consumed by the rural people themselves as wheel as for exchange; To use the use the enormous resources of the rural areas to lay a solid foundation for security, socio-cultural, political and economic growth and make the development of the nation; To make rural areas more productive and less vulnerable to naturally hazards, poverty exploitation and to ensure a deeply rooted and self- sustaining development process based on effectively mobilized mass participation (Gana, 1986;Chuba, 1997).

It is apparent that the DFRRI has noble objectives. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)Statistical Bulletin in 1998 noted that there was a slight improvement in basic infrastructure and small-scale enterprise in rural areas. However, the Project did not achieve many of its objectives due to lack of standards for project harmonization and effective coordination among the three tiers of government (CBN Statistical Bulletin, 1998) Experience also showed that the agency has served more than the interest of the Bureaucrats and contractors. The aim of DFRR was not delivered in most places because the Directorate became a Political Institution for propaganda. The Federal Government some instances failed to release funds that have been allocated for DFRRI Projects. Some State governments also made claims to projects they did not execute through DFRRI. Out of the 19,427km of feed roads to be constructed by DFRRI in 1989, only 7,267 km was verified by the Presidential Monitoring team (Olanrewaju, 1986; Muagbalu, 1992; Ujo, 1994; Chuba, 1997Haruna, 2000). These Pacts do suggest that rural development through the Directorate was likely going to fail because the program became a pipe for money making and the people were not directly involved in the planning and execution of the programs that affected them directly.The establishment of the Family Economic Advancement Prgramme (FEAP) in 1993 by the Abacha government was another strategy towards poverty reduction. The programme was specifically designed for local based producers of goods and services and potential entrepreneurs in the era of cottage industries. It also had the aim of providing basic working capital requirements for small scale farming and traditional processes as loans to the low-income groups, create employment at ward levels through the establishment of enterprises and pilot projects in the wards, utilize all available local resources for the benefit of Nigerians. However, the FEAP program did not attain its primary objective because of bad governance and endemic corruption that characterized the Abacha's regime.

Apparently, the military played a major role in rural development practice in Nigeria because of the greater number of years they had in governance after independence. An obvious reason for the inconclusive rural development plans and policies relates to a lack of strong

institutional arrangements to guarantee policy and plans continuity due to successive coups and change in government during the military era (Nwaezike, 2009; Akpan, 2012; Ogebidi, 2012). Most rural development programs over the decades are associated with regimes and which soon disappear with regime change. The military were not able to create enabling institutional environment given that power revolved around individuals and groups within the military hierarchy. Such instability in governance could not help nurture effective programs and institutions that could sustain rural development.

When Nigeria started experiencing democratic governance, the needed institutional foundation was already absent, while available ones were weak in capacity and rule enforcement. The implication is that individuals and leaders still cultivate enormous power and influence over the machinery of government, to the extent that corruption, nepotism and poor leadership have combined to inhibit the proper functioning of public policies and plans that are meant for ruraldevelopment.

STRATEGIES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPMENT

Various strategies have been adopted in Nigeria for bringing about rural development. Some of the approaches include:

- **Agricultural development**
- **Infrastructural development**
- **Industrialisation**
- **Integrated rural development and**
- **Community development**

Rural Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The efforts to improve agricultural production in the rural areas started shifting to poverty alleviation and sustainable development in the mid 1990's. Poverty alleviation became a critical issue as most African countries were weakened by lingering conflicts and economic liberalization policies and lost their capability to implement rural development projects (Takeuchi, 2001). Because of the lingering issue of poverty in Africa, the World Bank announced its intention to revitalize activities of rural development during the Mid 1990's (World bank Annual Report, 1997). African regional bodies also agreed to take measures to address challenges of poverty when Africans realized that about half of its population was living on less than $ 1 per day. Subsequently, poverty alleviation and employment issues dominated rural development programs from the democratic era beginning from 1999. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted by the Assembly of African Heads of State in 2001 as a strategic framework for African leaders to address poverty and underdevelopment throughout the African continent. The National Poverty Eradication program (NAPEP) an innovation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development was set up also in the year 2001 by the Nigerian government with the responsibility of addressing rural development in

Nigeria and related issues, training of youths in vocational trades to support internship, micro credit, create employment industry and provide a social welfare scheme. To implement these programs, the government placed emphasis on complementation, collaboration between different tiers of government, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations. The general vision of the scheme was to bring about a participatory and sustainable development and completely eradicate poverty in Nigeria. It also had an elaborate structure with the top agency being the National Poverty Eradication Council (Bindir, 2002; Omah, 2004; Adoyi, 2010). But after many years of implementation the NAPEP programme, the living conditions

of the rural populace did not since most of the programs carried out by NAPEP were concentrated in the urban areas. Poverty levels were indicated to have also increased from 54.4% in 2004 to 60. % percent in 2010 (Ugoh et al, 2009; Adoyi, 2010; Akpan, 2012). Ugoh, et al (2009) and Randel, (2010) identified factors that have contributed to the failure of NAPEP to involve the rural poor, targeting mechanisms, failure to focus on the rural areas, programme inconsistency, poor implementation and corruption.

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS: 2003-2007) was also introduced in 2003 as a medium-term strategy modeled towards the IMF's poverty reduction and growth facility to achieve some macro-economic goals of stability, poverty, wealth creation and employment generation. The programme was nationally coordinated with State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS) and the Local Government Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (LEEDs). The LEEDS was to focus its effort in keeping the program in contact with the rural areas since it is the closest level of government to the rural areas (Omah, 2004; Randel 2010). Compared to the rest of the poverty alleviation programs in the post democratic era, the NEEDS strategy was at least on record able to minimize the incidence of poverty in rural Nigeria. This was possibly because it had a wider coverage and the involvement of the different ties of government in reproducing the program within their respective domains (Adoyi, 2010; Akpan, 2012; Yahaya, 2019). Although it is quite statistically difficult to comprehensively assess the progress recorded by NEEDS in regards to its initial objectives of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment of the people especially in the rural areas, some studies, however ague that that NEEDS was not different from previous public programs in terms of political commitment and implementation practices (Omah, 2004; Nwaezike, 2009; Adoyi, 2010; Yakubu and Aderonmu, 2010; Idris, 2011;Oruonye, 2013).

Emerging Challenges of Rural Development in Nigeria

Even though the democratic government in Nigeria is expected to offer more opportunities for development, most of the populace particularly in the rural area suffer from abject poverty and deprivation. Despite several policies of rural development instituted in Nigeria, the condition of poverty has not changed much. The report by the Poverty World Clock in 2018 revealed that Nigeria has the largest extreme poverty population in the world making it the poverty capital of the world. Like Haruna, (2000) and Alanana, (2005) observed most rural programs in Nigeria have failed because they are approached from the top. The programs are formulated and implemented by government officials in league with foreign interest to the neglect of the peasant producers who are knowledgeable in the process of rural production. Consequently, due to the non-involvement of the rural producers in the process of their development, these development programs do not record success. The contention here is that the interest of those who control the machinery of Government do not often confirm to those of the rural poor. As a result, the various attempts to aim at transforming the rural areas has failed to yield positive results.

The failure of the rural development programs can therefore be attributed to the glaring contradictions in the activities of government saddled with the responsibility of implementing the programs and the inability of reconciling the interest and need of the local people. This perhaps further compounds the persistent problem of poverty and squalor in the rural communities in Nigeria and constitutes a barrier to rural development. Rural development has prospect of succeeding when the people are willing to accept and participate in initiating and implementing the policies and programs of government.

Findings curled from the Nigeria Rural Development Strategy Report also (2006) revealed two broad dimensions of the present rural condition in Nigeria namely Rural Mass Deprivation and Individual Deprivation. The Rural Mass Deprivation manifests in lack of socio-economic infrastructure such as feeder roads, agricultural inputs, credit facilities, health and education centers, sanitation facilities water supply and functional markets. While on the other hand, the individual deprivation involves the inability of the rural dwellers to secure employment due to their lack of requisite skill. These two dimensions of rural poverty imply lack of options and opportunities for majority of the rural population and subsequently, the inability to live decent healthy and creative lives consistent with those living in the urban areas. Corruption and mismanagement of resources at different levels of government in Nigeria has also greatly hindered the effective utilization of resources that would have been channeled towards developing the rural areas. Despite being an exporter of crude oil for about four decades and receiving assistance from international organizations, the living condition of the rural people and general populace in Nigeria has not improved because of the endemic condition in the country.

The Transparency International report for 2015 indicated that 40 of the 46 African countries covered show a serious corruption problem and Nigeria were listed among the 40 countries grappling with high levels of corruption (TI, 2015; Adelabu et al, 2018).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The major problems in rural are, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, homelessness and crime and violence. Poverty is the condition, when the individuals do not possess sufficient financial resources to sustain their living conditions. The major causes of poverty are, unemployment, participation in minority jobs, illiteracy and unawareness, occurrence of natural calamities and disasters, inadequate financial management, borrowing loans, large families, health care needs, migration and participation in other activities. Illiteracy is the inability of the individuals to identify, interpret, understand, create, communicate, and compute, printed and written materials. The difficulties that individuals are required to experience depend upon the extent of these problems. There have been formulation of measures, policies and programs by the government, organizations and agencies, which aim to alleviate these problems and facilitate education, health care and employment opportunities among the individuals.

The paper attempted to analyze the processes of rural development in Nigeria with emphasis on the major rural development policies that have been initiated in the country. It also identified the emerging and current challenges to achieving sustainable rural development in Nigeria. It is obvious that though the rural areas in Nigeria have constituted bulk of the Nations population and have engaged in primary activities like agriculture that serve as a base for producing food and fiber, the living condition of the rural populace have been characterized by extreme poverty, lack of access to basic facilities like health center, schools, safe drinking water and good roads. Since the rural areas are not attractive to live in, the country has continued to experience a massive rural to urban migration.

The government in Nigeria has initiated several polices to alleviate the deplorable conditions of the rural areas but the situation has not changed much since independence. The Challenges of policy inconsistency and implementation, involvement of the rural populace in development projects, corruption and mismanagement of resources, herders and farmers conflicts amongst others are still impeding the realization of rural development in Nigeria. The above submission indicates that no meaningful development in Nigeria can be attained unless priority is given to rural development.

RECOMMENDATION

The paper recommends that:

i. More concerted efforts should be made toward development of rural areas. These should include increase in budget allocation, effective policy implementation and completion.
ii. Corruption and mismanagement of resources should also be discouraged by punishing officials engaged in associated corrupt cats and blocking channels of diverting resources through effective budget planning and monitoring
iii. Provision of Security, conflict resolution and building mechanisms should be of upmost priority in the rural areas to curb the recent increase in famer-herder clashes and to also discourage the parties involved from taking the law into their hands.
iv. The aspect of participation is very critical in rural development. Thus the rural populace should be involved and integrated in the formation and implementation of rural development projects if rural transformation is to be attained.

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