

## IMPLEMENTATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES / POLICIES IN NIGERIA: A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

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Development remains central to developing and developed nations of the world. This concern has made nations to actively pursue the issue of development with concerted efforts. Using different development strategies as well as making it sustainable without affecting future generation. This brought about the concept of sustainable development. This study seeks to critically examine rural development programmes/policies in Nigeria, the sustainable development perspectives. Data for the study were gathered from the secondary sources. The findings reveals among others that Nigeria since independence have initiated several development policies but abandoned because of lack of proper supervision, non-release of budgeted of funds, corruption, lack of qualified staff and so on. Consequently, the study recommended that there should be proper and adequate supervision of all rural development policies/programmes, qualified and adequate manpower should be engaged to manage rural development programmes among others so that the developmental efforts can be sustainable.

**Keywords:** Development, Rural Area, Sustainable development, Programmes

### INTRODUCTION

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Rural Development has become very popular among the third world countries in which Nigeria is not an exception. Like almost all the developing countries globally, the Nigerian government has realized that great concern should be given to rural areas' development to reduce the gap between the urban and the rural areas. The concern about rural development has made the issue to assume enormous national attention in Nigeria. Before now, the Federal Government of Nigeria sees agricultural and rural development has synonymous. However, this turns out to be untrue when

agricultural development in the seventies failed to develop rural areas in Nigeria, thus indicating the rural areas' neglect. The consequences of the rural neglect manifest in total rural underdevelopment, population explosion, unemployment, high crime rate, rural-urban drift, stunted urban growth and development, rebellion, political apathy, and unrest, amidst other undesirable consequences (Ekong 2003).

Efforts aimed at developing rural areas in Nigeria have been made since the colonial era. The concern has been transforming the agrarian base society like Nigeria to a developed nation with capacities. Policies targeted at improving the rural areas and pursued by various governments (Federal, State, and Local) have been put in place and pursued partially since the 1960s (Ering 2000). Rural development has occupied an essential position in the mind of scholars, policy makers, and developmentalist. Different policies geared towards improving the rural areas and pursued by the various governments have been put in place; despite these efforts, Nigeria still has most of its rural areas undeveloped. These have made the question of the sustainability of developmental projects/policies fundamental. This paper seeks to look at the implementation of Rural Development programmes/policies in Nigeria the sustainable development perspectives.

## CONCEPTUAL EXPLICATION

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### Implementation

Simply put, implementation means getting things done. It could also mean carrying out, fulfilling, and completing a given objective. Planning a particular course of action and adopting a programme does not guarantee that the action will strictly follow policymakers' aims and objectives. The stage of enforcement of a course of action is known as implementation. As opined by Hanadle and Klauss (1979), implementation refers to converting human and material inputs, including information, finance, technical knowledge, human demands, supports, etc. into outputs in the form of goods and services.

According to Tom (2015), depending on the circumstance, implementation can refer to the delivery of a specific programme. Implementation of programmes remains one of the critical steps in public policy. In planning any programme and for it to be effective, special attention should be given to the implementation stage. Many actors are involved during the implementation of a policy, adopting many policy instruments available and applicable to enforce the decisions the policy enacted (Anderson, 2006). Policy implementation is an activity that involves the committal

funds, the establishment of structures and methods, the hiring of personnel, the administering or exceeding of activities, and the searching of policy goods, services, and other intended outcomes (Egonmwan, 1991).

### Sustainable Development

Like most social and management science concepts, these are no widely accepted definitions; different scholars define the concept according to their background and what they intend to achieve. Simply put, to sustain means to hold, maintain, prolong, and keep in the existence of something. In 1987, the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) chaired by Norway's Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, came out with sustainable development. It was defined as "economic and social development that meets the needs of the current generation without endangering future generations' ability to satisfy their needs and choose their lifestyle." World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) sees sustainable development to embody principles, ideas, and values seen as desired and necessary if the world is to be handled effectively with current global problems of environment and the process of development. Therefore, sustainable development embodies the notion and idea of a development process that is equitable and socially responsive that recognizes the extensive nature of poverty deprivation and inequality between and within the nation's classes and communities (Onah 1995).

Ballara (1991) opined that sustainable development is humanity's ability to survive to utilize the rational use of renewable resources, by refraining from disrupting the ecosystem or overexploiting natural resources and refraining from activities that destroy cultures or societies and instead allow them to reach their potential. Sustainable development is an avenue by which communities seek economic development approaches that benefit the local environment and quality of life. It gives a framework in which communities can use resources efficiently, create efficient infrastructures, protect and enhance the quality of life, and create new businesses to strengthen their generation and those that follow ours. Therefore, sustainable development must meet the present's needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs (Uluocha 2003, Nyagb 2009) cited in Okazie and Baharuddin (2013).

In developing society such as Nigeria, it is essential to look at development at a level that will be sustainable to the benefiting communities. When development can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, thereby maintaining or enhancing its capabilities and assets for now and in the future, it is sustainable while not undermining the natural resources base. The theory of sustainable development was

developed due to strong criticism of the neo-classical development theories.

Sustainable development theory has been based on two schools of thought-economics and ecology. The economic school focuses on optimal resources management that is maximizing the nets benefits of economic development while maintaining the service and quality of natural resources (Barbier, 1989), while the ecology base school of thought stress using renewable natural resources in a manner that does not degrade or diminish their renewable usefulness for future generation (Goodland/Ladec, 1987).

Sustainable development in rural areas in Nigeria is significant because of widespread poverty, illiteracy, lack of necessary infrastructure, etc. This is the task before the policymakers and implementers in Nigeria. It is imperative to consider the institutional support of the providers of development programmes in the rural communities in Nigeria in terms of well-defined laws, participatory policy-making processes, and effective public and private sector organizations that create a framework within which the development projects can be continually improved. In exerting any development project by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, or community help projects, institutional support should be considered since this will permanently help maintain the project. It could be achieved by involving the community from the starting point to ensure sustainability.

### Rural Development

Several authors depending on their discipline, have defined rural development; however, there is no generally accepted definition of rural development. According to Diejemaoh (1972) cited in Nwachukwu (2009), rural development is a process of not only maximizing the level of per capita income in the rural area but also the standard of living of the rural population; the standard of living depending on such factors as food and nutrition level, health, education, housing, recreation, and security. World Bank (1975), cited in Eme (2009), defined rural development as a strategy designed to improve a specific group of people's economic and social life, the rural poor. It entails extending the benefits of development to the poor among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants, and landlords.

Accordingly, a development economist, Lele (1975), defined rural development as improving the standard of the mass of the low-income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining. Nwachukwu (2009) citing Ollawa, (1971) rural development means;

*The restructuring of the economy, to satisfy the rural masses' material needs and aspirations and promote individual and collective incentives to participate in development. This involves a host of multi-sectional activities, including the improvement of agriculture, the advancement of rural industries, the creation of the requisite amenities and social overheads, and the establishment of appropriate decentralized structures to allow mass participation.*

Idike (1992) assert that rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of the rural areas, while Mabagunje (1980) defined rural development as being concerned with the improvement of the lives of the low-income population living in the rural areas on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the social, spatial structures of their productive activities. Viewing the development and sustainable level and continues, Adegboye (1972) defined rural development as the development of rural dwellers in such a continuous manner to enable to most effectively and efficiently utilize their intellects, technology, and other resources for further development for both themselves and their resources.

From the definitions above, it is evident that rural development lacks a précised definitions, but generally, the primary concern of rural development from all the definitions leads one to "making the rural area comfortable" for the rural dwellers. Rural development is an effort to make the rural areas comfortable for the rural dwellers by providing almost the facilities that are obtainable in the urban areas.

### Features of a Rural Area

In considering rural development, it is also pertinent to identify the features of a rural area that is yearning for development. Development is conceived as the multi-dimensional processes involving changes in structures, attitudes, and institutions, accelerating economic growth, reducing inequality, and eradicating absolute poverty (Ering 2006). A more significant population of Nigeria resides in rural areas with or no development efforts. The common feature of rural areas, whether in develop or developing countries includes:

- I. High levels of poverty, especially among those on women-headed household
- II. Endemically low productivity
- III. The smallness of cultivable land owned by a farmer
- IV. Technical inefficiency of agriculture due to inadequate production methods
- V. Low per capita income of the rural dweller

- VI. Social infrastructures, including educational facilities, water supply, electricity supply, and communication facilities, are low relative to the urban sector level.
- VII. Physical infrastructures, including transportation facilities, storage facilities, processing facilities, and irrigation facilities, are generally low.
- VIII. Institutional infrastructures including credit and financial institutions, cooperative societies and farmers warriors, agricultural extension services, agricultural institutions are either weak or ineffective and
- IX. Comparatively, low level of living in rural than urban areas (Ladede 2011) cited in (Uchechi 2013).

### Efforts of the Nigerian Government towards Rural Development

Efforts aimed at developing rural areas in Nigeria did not start today. More of the underdeveloped societies, including Nigeria, were characterized by low output, low capital formation, distorted economics, and poverty, manifested in a low standard of living (Atte, 1986). Arising from the problems mentioned above, the Nigerian government evolved towards rural development, though it was an agricultural base. Some of the strategies include:

- I. Farm Settlement and Plantation Scheme of 1959/1960
- II. National Acceleration Food Production Programme (NAFPP) of 1972
- III. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of 1976
- IV. Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPS) of 1976
- V. Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) of 1973
- VI. River Basin Development Authority (RBDAS) of 1976
- VII. Rural Banking Scheme (RBS) of 1978
- VIII. Green Revolution (GR) of 1980
- IX. Industrial Development Cooperation (IDC) of 1984
- X. National Directorate of Employment (NDE) of 1986
- XI. Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) of 1986
- XII. Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN) of 1987
- XIII. Better Life for Rural Women of 1987
- XIV. Community Bank Programme of 1990
- XV. National Fadama Development Project (NFDP) 1990s
- XVI. National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) of 1992
- XVII. Family Support Programme (FSP) of 1995
- XVIII. Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) of 1997
- XIX. Nigerian Agricultural Co-operative and Rural Development Bank Ltd (NACRDB) 2000

- XX. Agricultural and Rural Transformation Programme (ARTP) 2000
- XXI. Micro-Finance Bank (2005)
- XXII. National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) of 2003 (Ayichi 1995, Nwankwo 2009, Obi, 2010).
- XXIII. Child Care Trust 1999
- XXIV. National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) 2000
- XXV. Nigerian Agricultural cooperative and rural development bank ltd (NACRDB) of 2000
- XXVI. Agricultural and rural transformation programme (ARTR) of 2000
- XXVII. National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS) 2002
- XXVIII. Root and Tubers Expansion Programme (RTEP) 2003
- XXIX. National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2004
- XXX. Microfinance bank of 2005
- XXXI. Women and Youth Empowerment Foundation 2007
- XXXII. Women for Change Initiative
- XXXIII. Women and Youth Empowerment Programmes
- XXXIV. Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS)
- XXXV. SURE-P
- XXXVI. Community Service Scheme
- XXXVII. Graduate Internship Scheme
- XXXVIII. YOU WIN, etc.

In addition to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd National Development Plans, all these programmes aimed to reduce inequality between the rural and urban areas.

Other programme instituted by the government though not exhaustive includes:

- I. Low-Cost Housing Scheme
- II. Universal Primary Education (UPE)
- III. Rural Water Supply Scheme
- IV. Transport Scheme
- V. Health Scheme (Sanitary, Immunization Primary Health Care, etc.)
- VI. Basic Primary Education Scheme
- VII. The Nomadic Education Programme
- VIII. The Migrant Fishermen Scheme

The adoption of these Rural Development policies in Nigeria is an admission of Sectoral Dualism and sectoral imbalances as of the need to remedy the existing imbalances (Ebong 1991). Efforts have been put in place since, but the desired result remains a mirage; every administration in Nigeria is forced to consider rural

development as part of its cardinal objectives.

Almost all the policies/programmes by various administrations are well planned with little flows. However, its implementation is changing, making it relatively impossible to get the result because every new regime comes to power with different ideas and approaches towards solving rural development problems.

Every rural development policy/programme, when adopted, should have been sustainable, spanning through the administrations. All these policies/programmes are intended to achieve the desired rural development in rural development. Generally, FAO (1973), cited in Ekejiube (1990) summarized the goals of rural development from a human perspective in the following ways;

- I. The satisfaction of elementary basic needs of food, shelter, clothing, and health.
- II. They improve the sixty percent rural population's lifestyle and quality of life through qualitative and quantitative changes.
- III. Establishment of social justices, through the humanely fair distribution of goods and services.
- IV. Freeing the individual from the uncertainties of native through education essential for self-actualization and
- V. They broke through the marginality of rural masses through full active participation in all the activities and command-research, planning, and implementation levels.

### **Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria**

Sustainable development is needed to promote and enhance development in the rural area. Sustainable development is people-centered, holistic, and dynamic and partnership in nature. Sustainable rural development involves equality, economic vitality, political stability, maintenance of the environment, disaster resilience, and the high quality of life, cooperation, partnership, and participation.

This approach focuses on how development can be achieved and sustained for the future generation through its insight on human sustainability, environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and technological sustainability. In Adegboye (1972), rural development is the development of the rural people in such a continuous manner as the enable them to most effectively and efficiently utilize their



intellect, technology, and other resources for further development for both themselves and their resources. Government policies/programmes on rural development aim to make life meaningful at the rural level in a sustainable manner. In an official government statement cited in Nwankwo and Okonkwo (2009), the establishment of (DFRRI) by the Federal Military Government in 1986 was intended to bring accelerated and sustainable rural development to the doorstep of the rural communities where over seventy percent of our people reside and work principally as farmers. However, DFRRI was abandoned by the succeeding regime.

To achieve rapid and sustainable rural development, long-term planning will take into account the future's interest. The act of abandoning the previous administration's programme/policies, especially as it has to do with rural development, is a severe setback in Nigeria. Rural development programme sustainability has to do with continuity in implementing the rural development programme already started. Also, the embarrassing paradox of poverty amid plenty in Nigeria raises the compelling need for a single-minded pursuit of the objectives of poverty reduction/rural development and its eventual eradication. A determined attack on poverty, food insecurity, and rural under-development will require the formulation of a new development paradigm that recognized the state's role in protecting the right of the weaker and sequent of the population and meeting their basic needs.

In articulating this new paradigm, we have recognized that balanced social development is a fundamental and essential prerequisite for "sustainable development with the environment." However, a meaningful pattern development is meaningful for the large majority of the population, and that social development cannot be achieved by empty political pronouncement or financed with half-hearted budgetary allocation. The reason for rural development is divers therefore proposed solutions need to be multifaceted and adapted to the local context. The "one size fits all" policies, such as that of the River Basin Development Authority, must be modified with inputs from a mode range of stakeholders to meet their respective communities' unique peculiarities. The rural people need to have inputs on the significant decisions affecting their wellbeing so that they can help in making the government policies/programmes sustainable. They also need to have greater access to assets-human, social, natural infrastructure, technological, and financial, if they are to take control of their lives and protect the programme/policies as well as the environment for future generation. The Participatory Community Development Approach (PCDA) is not used. This new paradigm would have facilitated poverty alleviation, employment generation, wealth creation, and value orientation among rural people in Nigeria. This approach would have made the rural people to be

driving force of their development.

The rural poor are not able to build individual, collective capabilities to access economic opportunities and social service and infrastructure. Lack of strong social organisation makes it difficult for the poor to explore potential opportunities within their communities and developed linkages with external stakeholders. This rural development approach is adored by the state government, the local government, and civil society. It is not a federal government, one-size-fits-all, imposed programme. The beauty of this approach to rural development is that it recognises the individual communities' peculiarities and uniqueness. It provides the state and local government the autonomy to evolve and execute rural development programmes that consider their peculiar circumstances. This way, the two tiers of government will feel concerned and committed to the programmes and work towards its success. Various good programme/policies have been initiated in Nigeria and abandoned after a brief implementation effort without achieving the main objectives. Generally, the following has been identified as some reasons why some of the government programmes/policies on sustainable rural development failed and could not stand the test of time;

- a) Lack of proper supervision of rural development projects: The award and supervision of rural development project is an issue that is sometime treated with lip service in Nigeria. Some of the policies/programmes are great ideas that would have brought sustainable rural development but this is not done, once initiated and award, no proper follow up by qualified personnel.
- b) Leadership problem: Most of the programmes initiated are not given to the right person(s) to manage, as some unqualified personnel because of corruption, nepotism are made heads of an institution they see it as an avenue to make wealth and not giving the leadership it deserves.
- c) Lack of coordination among the different bodies: Rural development flourishes on partnership or shared responsibility; there is no single actor that is solely responsible. The government at all levels, NGOs, cooperate organization and the rural areas are suppose to partner for effective and sustainable rural development.
- d) Lack of continuity of programmes/policies: This is one of the major bane of rural development in Nigeria. Every administration/regime tends to come with different policies/programme to tackle one common problem. Since Nigeria gained her independence, almost every administration in Nigeria

comes to power with its policies/programme making the continuation of the already started rural development programme impossible. The policy/programmes from incubation stage to the actual implementation stage sometimes spans through a particular administration/regime. No rural development policy/programme has been widely accepted as holistically perfect, but certain parts may address the problem; it sometimes does not call for a total policy change. The introduction of a new programme brings about new staff and new ideas and the former is sometime jettison. For instance, during Babangida's regime, Better life for Rural Women was introduced and when Abacha took over, he brought Family Support Programme. Every administration want to be identified with a particular programme not minding if the former was productive.

- e) Corruption: It involves the deliberate violation of the constitutional ways for personal gains. Corruption comes in various ways, imposition of contractors, embezzlement of funds for projects, using of sub-standard materials, using of unqualified personnel etc. All these contributed to the problem of sustainable rural development in Nigeria.
- f) Dearth of qualified staff: The dearth of qualified and relevant professionals in most of the programmes was a glaring limitation that impings negatively on the performance of such programme.
- g) Paucity of funds: Funds is essential if there is deliberate efforts to address a particular situation. Fund for rural development programmes are sometimes not release, if release not sufficient for the programme.
- h) Lack of consultation with the rural dwellers: It is the rural dwellers that wear the shoes of rural neglect that knows where it actually pinches, but they are sometimes ignored in the choice, initiation and implementation of rural development programmes. Due to this exclusion, apathy always sets in thereby paving way for opposition at the implementation stage of such project. Sustainably development activities should generate local resources (human and material) to support the continuation of benefit at a steady or growing level. When the local people are involved in the programme, they will see it as their own and not an imposition, especially when they are consulted from the starting point.

According to Onah, and Okeke (2009:255):

*beneficiary participation should be the most effective mechanism for participatory development, especially in societies like our own. In a participatory approach to rural development, a dealership recognized by the group conceives a project; the group actualizes it, and benefits are enjoyed equitably by the group. Outsiders do not impose the project on the people, and a few individuals cannot hijack it from the majority.*

Also, at the commencement of any project, the skills, technology, and the expertise used should be inculcated in the rural people so that when they (donors) go, the people can use the skills to sustain the programme and will make them be self-reliance and not depending on others.

From the preceding, sustainable rural development involves improving the present generation's living standard with a conscious effort not to destroy the environment and developmental efforts to partake in it.

**Top-down approach:** This shows that policies emanate from the top and sent down to the rural areas. It is commonly evident that most of these government policies/programmes are mostly initiated at the top and send to the rural areas. According to Onah and Okeke (2009), "...formulation of national policies and programmes is the responsibility of government. However these policies and programmes should not be imposed by government or any donor agency but rather should be articulated by the people themselves in conformity with their various needs and aspiration. It is only through this way that development programmes can be effectively executed and sustained".

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Nigeria has a long history of developing mechanisms for improving the rural economy to tackle once and for all their problems of rural poverty and food insecurity. However, neither rural poverty nor acute food insecurity has been arrested and ineffective in rural development.

The paper argued here that, like most others, these policies were not based on the principle of popular participation; they, therefore, tended to operate Rom to downward. This is demonstrated in the amenities provided for the rural communities. Besides, rural development has been viewed as synonymous with improved agricultural productivity, without looking at the interrelatedness of sectors and the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. The rural livelihood perspective has been neglected and considered significant. It is not true that every rural dweller is a farmer.

Every nation's development depends on its social sector's efficiency, financial sector, infrastructural, and governance.

Nigeria is endowed with natural and human resources if sustainably harnessed, which will ensure Nigeria's overall development. Most rural development programmes/policies are well planned and targeted from the study, but the general problem is implementation. The study's findings also indicate the politicization and personalization of rural development programmes; every administration wants to be known with a particular programme. These have caused the abandonment of programmes/policies. Rural development programme/policies should be pursued headlong considering urban migration speed, which has made some cities congested. Every initiated programme should be seen beyond a particular regime.

### Recommendations

Specifically, the study recommends the following;

- i. Every administration should continue rural development programmes initiated by the former administration.
- ii. Rural development should be people-oriented. The rural dwellers should be involved in the planning and implementation of any project meant for them. This will curb the withdrawal of support, apathy, and opposition during such projects' implementation stage.
- iii. Qualified and relevant staff should be engaged and mobilized for rural development programmes and there should be proper supervision of a rural development project.
- iv. The top-down approach in project site choice should be discouraged; projects should emanate from the rural areas.
- v. Legislation should put in place to make every government in power continue with the former's programmes, especially as it has to do with rural development.

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