

POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Actions need to be taken on several fronts simultaneously in an integrated manner to break the vicarious circle of poverty in Nigeria. Villagers must also have political powers so that decision makers will no longer neglect rural interests. An important aspect of sustainable democracy is poverty alleviation. This paper therefore examines the concepts of poverty and sustainable democracy. It therefore recommends an Octagonian model of integrated rural development to alleviate poverty especially in the rural sectors for sustainable democracy and overall development of Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s, it was increasingly recognized that economic growth alone cannot reduce poverty and as such four complimentary strategies of increasing employment, meeting basic needs, reducing inequalities in income and wealth, and raising the productivity of the poor were recommended (World Bank, 1980). Equally and for sometime now, effort have been directed at human resource development to alleviate poverty in various countries. This is very related to the economic view of improving the quality of the labour force to improve productivity and raise standard of living.

Nigeria's rural communities account for 70 percent of the total population but receive less than 30 percent of the total government expenditure annually (Diejomaoh 1972 quoted by Nwosu, 1980). As the rural sectors of the economy suffer serious neglect thereby accounting for a higher percentage of mass poverty in Nigeria, therefore, there is the need to have a balanced national economic development through sound rural improvement (Williams, 1985).

Traditionally, the rural dwellers have low aspirations and are slow to initiate and accept changes because of low level of awareness, mass illiteracy and poor information network. However, it is now imperative that a concerted effort has to be made to increase the production capacity of the rural dwellers through a comprehensive package that is termed 'integrated rural development'. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to fashion out a schematic model for the renewed Integrated Rural Development (IRD) programme in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE CONCEPT OF POVERTY

Poverty is a condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy and disease as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency (World Bank, 1980). The World Bank report further observes that more than three-quarters of the poor people live in rural areas and that as much as four-fifths of their income is consumed as food. It describe the situation of poverty further by saying:

The result is a monotonous limited diet of cereals, yams or cassava - with a few vegetables and in some places a little fish or meat. Many of them are mal-nourished to the point where their ability to work hard is reduced, the physical and mental development of their resistance to infections is low (World Bank, 1980: 1).

Along the same line, Lipton (1988) defines poverty as a function of low transformation capacity of labour into food and lack of discretionary income to buy much non-food (p. 16).

On the other hand, Isiguzo (1997) reported Choices (1996) as having quoted Brundtland that poverty involve lack of opportunity and freedom. It is hunger and malnutrition, disease and

lack of basic social services. It is a policy failure that degrades - those who suffer it and those who tolerate. It is an equity gap between countries. Poverty is still the greatest insult to human dignity. Poverty is the soar on humanities face (Pp. 270 - 271). According to him, sometimes the poor works for several hours per day but can still not earn enough to feed himself and his family. Indeed, poverty is a state of inability to provide basic needs such as food, shelter, education, health and social services for oneself and his or her family.

CAUSES OF POVERTY IN NIGERIA

In the past decade as reported by Nduka (1997:21), more and more Nigerians have been sliding fast below the one - dollar - a - day level. Precisely, it has been observed that 28.9 percent (approximately 30 million) Nigerians live on 1 dollar per day (Nduka quoting the 1997 World Bank Development Report). Even Chief Rufus Giwa as reported by Nduka (1997) also alarmed that if care is not taken by the year 2000 A.D., about two-thirds of the Nigerian population may fall below the poverty line. However, the basic cause of poverty in Nigeria is the use of power in the accumulation of wealth to the detriment of societal welfare. This is coupled with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

The idea of SAP which was the brain child of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s with its stringent conditionalities like strict credit control, fiscal austerity, currency devaluation, deregulation of prices, reduction and elimination of subsidies, elimination and reduction of trades barriers, reduction in public work force etc. brought untold hardship on the people. It consequently led to low purchasing power, stifled social services, high rate of unemployment, worsening living conditions and poor workers remunerations. Thus, according to Tipoteh (1992:146) SAP has led to mass poverty in that it has been contractionary, recessionary and inflationary. According to him, the implementation of SAP has not been for poverty alleviation but rather, it has promoted a powerful social forces that continues to put public spending on state repressive activities such as heavy defence to promote undemocratic attitude.

The effect of the neglect of people's welfare is such that many of the rural sectors in Nigeria lack physical, social and institutional infrastructures like schools, accessible roads, health facilities, telecommunications, good drinkable water, electricity etc. Even, where there are primary schools, they are ill-equipped, poorly ventilated and delapidated. The villagers have to trek several kilometres for medical attention. Also, the mortality rate is high as a result of inability to pay medical bills. Many die of water-borne diseases due to inaccessible drinkable water, many of the farm products get rotten due to inaccessible markets. Young farmers get frustrated as a result of the tedious nature of farm work and crop failures due to climatic hazards. Many good farmlands have been destroyed in reckless bush burning thereby making the farmers more frustrated. The inaccessibility of some villages have also cut the rural dwellers from enjoying the services of Agricultural Extension Workers and credit facilities. Even, the effort of the People's Bank in alleviating rural poverty has not achieved much due to inaccessibility of some of the villages. The removal of subsidies on farm inputs has even reduced the output of the peasant farmers, thereby adding to their intolerable level of poverty. Unfortunately also, the discovery of crude-oil and its current position as the mainstay of Nigeria's economy has made government to shift attention from rural development to urban consolidation.

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY

Democracy as a term refers to government of the people based on elective representations. It has such features like existence of fundamental human rights, people' mandate, free and fair elections, universal adult sufferers decision-making based on majority views and the existence of rule of law.

For a country's democracy to be sustainable, it has to deal effectively with social and economic problems in order to achieve a medium of order or justice (Diamond, 1987). It would equally involve the right to be treated by fellow human beings as equal in polity and economic

parlance.

The instability in Nigerian democracy however has been blamed on low political culture, class struggle and prebendal politics. In the views of Dudley (1973) and Sklar (1968), the first and second democratic experiments in Nigeria failed because of lack of democratic traits and values. It is equally believed that all struggles are usually along class line and always between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats over the mode of production, distribution and exchange. Ake (1981) further posits that the intense political struggles for the control of state power was as a result of the nature of the country's social and economic structure that created a sharp division between the rich and the poor. Complimenting this, Nnoli (1978) contends that an attempt to exclude other regions of Nigeria from grabbing the crumbs of colonial production led to the demise of the first republic. Post and Vickers (1973) were even more assertive when they state that the collapse of democratic experiment in Nigeria was a result of the conflict that arose among the political parties over control of the system of reward. Joseph (1991) and Schatz (1984) also contend that political struggle and its attendant violence was made possible in Nigeria when the state power was being used to personalize acquisition and utilization of public resources. Thus, sustainable democracy demands equity, fairness and justice in resource distribution catering for both urban and rural dwellers.

BACKGROUND TO RURAL INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Idachaba (1985) noted that the first giant step towards rural infrastructural development in Nigeria could be traced to the Third Development Plan (1975 - 1980) which states that: the main objectives of rural development are to increase rural productivity and income, diversify rural economy and generally enhance the quality of life in the rural areas ... in addition, to raising agricultural productivity, effort will be made to enhance the quality of life in the rural areas through the provision of basic social amenities such as health centres, pipe-borne water, feeder roads and electricity (p. 2).

Thus, the planned Federal Government expenditure on rural infrastructures during the Third National Development Plan was N428.826 million and when added with that of the States it became N707.878 million (Idachaba, 1985:2). Equally Idachaba observed that the Fourth National Development Plan (1981 - 1985) also made rural man as the centrepiece of rural development strategy when it declares that:

... the policy of promoting a more rapid development of the rural areas through a sustained effort to raise agricultural productivity and provide basic human needs such as hygienic water supply, health facilities, access roads, electricity etc. will continue. This strategy will help to provide a basis for more even geographic spread of physical development throughout the country and help to counter-balance the strong trend towards rural-urban migration (Idachaba, 1985:21).

It must be noted however that the 1976 Local Government reforms in Nigeria made most of the components of rural infrastructures like markets and motor parks, public conveniences, community and local recreation centres, grazing grounds, fuel, plantations etc. to be the residual responsibilities of the local governments. By then also, items like health and maternity centres, *Adesina, S.A. & Adetoro, R. A.*

dispensaries, nursery and primary education, agricultural and veterinary extension, roads and streets lighting, drainage construction and maintenance etc. became the joint responsibilities of both the States and Local Governments (Idachaba, op cit). By the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria however, most components of the rural infrastructures were put on the concurrent legislative list, thus making them a joint responsibility of both the Federal and State Governments (Idachaba, op cit.). Presently, the development of rural infrastructures is a joint responsibility of National Agriculture Land Development Authority (NALDA), the State and the Local Governments.

CLASSES OF RURAL INFRASTRUCTURES IN NIGERIA

Idachaba (1985:5) classified rural infrastructures in Nigeria into three broad classes of physical, social and institutional infrastructures thus:

1. *Rural Physical Infrastructures*: The main components are:

Transportation facilities (roads, railways, bridges, ferry services, canals ports and footpaths);
Storage facilities (Silos, warehouses, crivs, open air facilities, etc.);
Processing facilities (machinery, equipment, building, etc.);
Irrigation, flood control and water resources development facilities (dams, irrigation and watering facilities, drainage systems etc.);
Soil conservation facilities.

2. *Rural Social Infrastructures:* The main components are:
Health facilities (hospitals, dispensaries, maternity and health centres etc); Education facilities (primary schools, secondary schools, teacher training colleges, technical schools, vocational schools, adult education facilities, and rural utilities (electricity, markets, water supplies).
3. *Rural Institution Infrastructures:* The main components include:
Cooperative societies, farmers' unions/groups, community development projects made possible through rural self-help institution;
Financial institutions (credit societies and institutions, banks, post office, savings banks etc.);
Agricultural research facilities (research substations and experimental farms, demonstration, plots, etc.);
Marketing and crop and animal protection services; and post and telecommunication facilities (post offices, postal agencies, telephone, etc.).

IMPORTANCE OF R. HAL INFRASTRUCTURES

Idachaba (1985) noted that the National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP), the Operation Feed the Nation, the Green Revolution Programme and other governmental development projects have had limited success in many areas because of very poor infrastructural support. According to him:

farmers suffering from debilitating, infective and parasitic diseases are unable to provide sustained intensive labour in a production system relying on human muscle energy of over 95 percent of its energy requirements (p. 2).

He goes further to state that infrastructural facilities are essential for providing the nation's marketed surpluses of food and fibre, to diversify the country's foreign exchange earnings, as well as diversify the income - generating capacities and gainful employment opportunities in the rural sector.

Specifically therefore, the importance of rural infrastructures include the following:

1. Road and rail transports help in accelerated delivery of farm inputs and outputs, reduced transportation burden, enhanced spatial agricultural production efficiency and enhanced effectiveness of public policy.
2. Storage facilities help to preserve food crops in the forms that consumers need them at the time that they need them; minimizes fluctuation in food and fibre supplies and helps to store inputs to boost agricultural production.
3. Irrigation facilities ensures adequate water supplies, stabilization of the nation's food production and agricultural product prices.
4. Health facilities rescue the peasants from ravages of disease, malnutrition and untimely death, It equally boosts their energy for labour supply.
5. Provision of social amenities like electricity, pipe-borne water and recreational facilities would help to stem-down the rate of rural-urban migrations and encourage the setting-up

- of cottage industries for processing of agricultural products.
6. Educational facilities help to remove the rural dwellers' ignorance and improve their literacy levels. It also improves their standard of living in terms of knowledge of nutrition, personal hygiene and environmental sanitation. It equally helps them to be more receptive to new techniques, ideas, innovations and changes. Indeed, provision of educational facilities would give the rural people the required human dignity, self-respect and sense of belonging as well as horizontal integration with the urban social systems.
 7. Rural Institutional Infrastructures help to pool resources together, liaise with other organizations, train personnel and deliver research results on new inputs and management practices to the rural sector. For instance, farmers' unions help to facilitate consolidation of fragmented land holdings as well as access to non-farm credit sources and other production requisites. Cooperative societies help to obtain loans and advances from relevant government agencies and they also distribute farm inputs to small scale farmers. An effective agricultural extension network helps to deliver research results when integrated with experimental research training, it ensures a two-way flow of information (Idachaba, 1985:8).

THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT (IRD)

Williams 1985: XVII) identified four main approaches to rural development which Nigeria had adopted in the past thus:

- i. coordinated approaches which focuses on economic development of all sectors within a given area;
- ii. participatory approaches which is designed to involve residents in selecting local economic and social needs with some government aids;
- iii. sector approaches which address agriculture or a few projects within it; and
- iv. multi-purpose programmes which aimed at estimating economic growth to foster popular support for government and promote security.

The concept of integrated rural development that is envisaged now therefore requires the mobilisation of human and material resources for the creation of a healthy national economy whose benefits will be shared among all the rural people (Williams 1985:20). Williams also posits that it combines active participation of the people concerned with the establishment of an

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efficient institution and of administrative facilities supplying effective communication at all levels. This according to him, will require the establishment of an Integrated Rural Development Council at the local government levels with top level administrators as the coordinating chairmen. Memberships of the Council are to be drawn from relevant Ministries like health, works, agriculture and agricultural research institutes, education, trade, cooperative finance and farmers cooperatives. The objectives of such council are threefold thus:

1. to facilitate communication;
2. to clarify the whole concept of Integrated Rural Development so that each Ministry and agency can see its contribution in relation to that of others;
3. to help obtain funds (Williams, 1985:21).

The council at the grassroot levels would be required to participate in and mobilize the rural dwellers for project implementation.

It is necessary that at the State and Federal levels, there is the need for the establishment of Ministry of Integrated Development to coordinate activities at council levels.

THE NEED FOR INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is mainly an agrarian community. This was clearly attested to by Olatubosun (1975) as quoted by Nwosu (1980:100) that agricultural activity occupies four-fifths of the rural population in Nigeria. According to him, it centres principally around farming, animal husbandry, poultry, fishing, forestry food processing and cottage industry. Yet, the standard of living of the rural people is far lower than that of the urban dwellers as many of them do not have access to basic economic and social infrastructures like water, roads, electricity, education and health facilities. The consequence of this is that:

Hundreds of thousands of young men and women abandon the countryside for the cities. And in the cities, they create and live in urban slums, engage in criminal and other anti-social acts that debase human nature, and thereby deface and

endanger urban environment and life (Nwosu, 1980:112).

Thus, there is the need to provide for an Integrated Rural Development to stem-down rural-urban drift and its anti-social consequences.

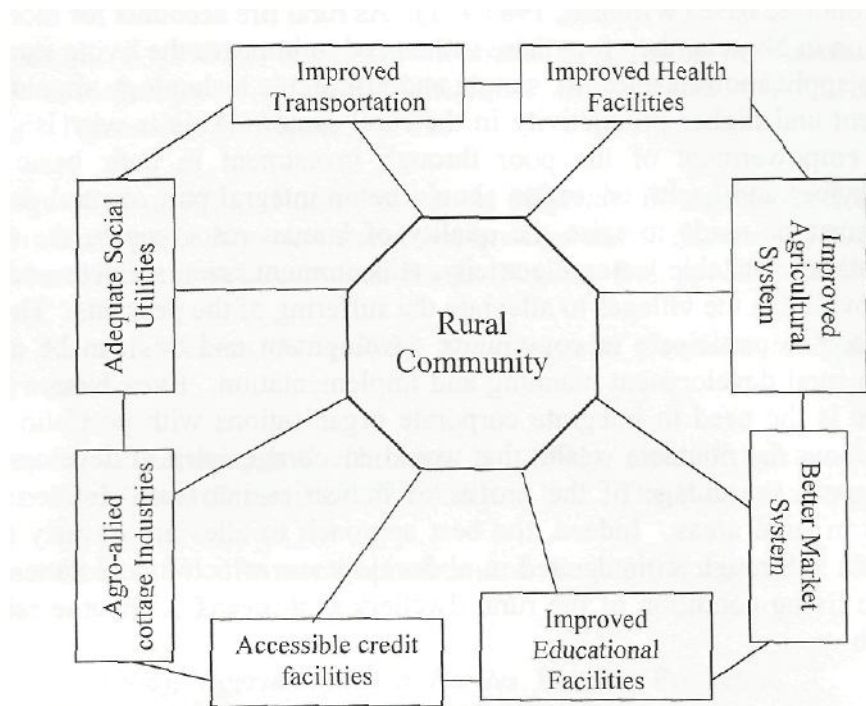
The rural community is a key factor in national economy in that it provides food production for the country. It is even the largest employer of labour and therefore it is very crucial to our future national progress (Williams 1985:XIX). In fact, as well remarked by Williams, broad-based rural development would stimulate the growth of small-scale industries, which would in turn benefit fully from economics of scale and create localized markets in rural sectors. By this therefore, it is very important to diversify the economy outside the urban centres through an Integrated Rural Development approach.

Williams (1985) also offers a humanitarian reason for giving priority to rural development. According to him, the utility of an increasing national income is greatest if the increase is distributed among the poorest strata of the population (rural dwellers). That is, the greater the proportion of Gross National Product (GNP) going to low income groups, the greater the effect of the increased GNP on the general welfare. Thus, an Integrated Rural Development would alleviate mass poverty by ensuring income redistribution in favour of the rural dwellers who for over two-thirds of the populace in Nigeria.

The need for an Integrated Rural Development is to harmonise the activities of the various developmental agencies like farming cooperative societies, National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), Nigeria Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Support Programme (FSP) and Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). This is necessary

to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure a holistic approach towards the emancipation of the rural dwellers in particular and the whole country in general.

Figure 1: An Octagonian Model of Integrated Rural Development (OMIRD)



The Octagonian Model of Integrated Rural Development (OMIRD) as shown in Figure 1 involves improved and accessible transportation, health facilities, agricultural system, market systems, educational facilities, credit facilities, agro-allied cottage industries and adequate social amenities and utility service.

The approach will require a network-based programming and budgeting for long term planning, construction, rehabilitation and improvements. Relevant government ministries, departments and agencies such as works and transport, health and social welfare, agriculture, education, water resources communication, commerce and industries, National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) National Agriculture Land Development Authority (NALDA), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) etc. must be represented in the Integrated Rural Development Council. The Integrated Rural Development Council must be adequately funded and well coordinated by the National and State Ministries of Integrated Rural Development. It is therefore suggested that fifty percent of the national revenue and budget must be allocated to the Integrated Rural Development Ministries and Councils.

Two or more rural communities located within a radius often kilometres could be served with centrally located infrastructures to conserve fund. Initially, the promotion of intermediate means of transport like canoes, boats (in riverine areas), bicycles, motorcycles and tricycles to boost off-road transport are required to facilitate accessibility and effective mobility of the rural people. On the long run however, the target should be to modernize the various road networks and other means of transportation to ensure a balance between rural and urban life.

Supportive resource mobilization from the local communities is desirable for the integrated approach to rural development to be total and holistic. A periodic monitoring and

evaluation of the rural projects at all levels is necessary to ensure non-deviation from target objectives and judicious utilization of the allocated funds.

CONCLUSION

Rural development must operate from an economic base and in the case of Nigeria-agriculture is the economic base (Williams, 1985:121). As rural life accounts for more than 70% of the total population in Nigeria, therefore there is the need to improve the living standard of the rural dwellers. The application of relevant, simple and affordable technology should be the key to better employment and higher productivity in the rural sector. This is why Isiguzo (1997) recommended the empowerment of the poor through investment in their basic capacities. Improved health services and health education should be an integral part of rural development. Concerted efforts must be made to raise the quality of human resources in the rural sector through good education, drinkable water, electricity, telecommunication services and accessible roads have to be provided in the villages to alleviate the suffering of the peasants. The rural man needs to be motivated to participate in community development and this can be achieved by integrating him into rural development planning and implementation. Even Nduka (1997) also postulates that there is the need to integrate corporate organisations with portfolio investor to create new and judicious distributable wealth that would encourage spirit of development meant to plough back a given percentage of the profits of industries into well defined social and economic activities in rural areas. Indeed, the best approach to alleviate poverty and sustain democracy in Nigeria is through an integrated rural development which focuses attention on the improvement of the living condition of the rural dwellers as a means of income redistribution and balanced growth.

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