Rural Development Institutions and Nigeria's Future

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Abstract
It is the object of this study to draw attention to the fact that the rural sector in Nigeria has witnessed total neglect since Nigerian independence 57 years ago. The study also demonstrates that the rural sector is Nigeria's economic mainstay and it has the potential to transform Nigerian economy. It is this worrisome situation and the necessity to address the problem that inspired the need to carry out this study on institutions saddled with rural development in agriculture, water supply, road construction, and electricity supply. The work also examined the importance/objectives and or benefits of the sectors and also challenges confronting the sectors in Nigeria. In gathering data for the study we relied mainly on secondary sources of information or data gathering and subsequently, adopted content analysis technique in our analysis. The finding of the study include: Contribution of agriculture, food sufficiency, source of industrial raw-material, source of employment etc. On the other hand, neglect of agriculture leads to hunger, unemployment economic backwardness, and dependence on foreign imported goods. "Water is life", safe drinking water enhance healthy living, and water is used for irrigation farming, fishing and transportation. The contribution of rural roads to development include: accelerated delivery of farm inputs, evacuation of agricultural products and reduction in the cost of transportation. Rural electrification boosts socio-economic transformation. Based on this, the study recommended that the government should sustain the agencies and increase fund allocation to these areas to sustain development.

Introduction

A large population of Nigerians lives in the rural areas of the country. Food and fiber is produced majorly in -rural areas. According to Ayodele 1976, about 70 percent of Nigerians dwell in the rural areas. Specifically, these rural areas lie outside the densely built-up environment of towns, cities and the sub-urban villages whose inhabitants are engaged primarily in agriculture as well as the most basic rudimentary form of secondary and tertiary activities, (Adebayo, 1998; Ezeah, 2005).

The rural sector of Nigeria is very vital in the socio-economic development equation of the nation. Nyagba (2009) has observed that the most important sector of the Nigerian population is in the rural areas. For instance, the rural sector is the major source of capital

formation for the country and a principal market for domestic manufacturers, (Olatumbosun, 1975).

Given the contributions of the rural sector to the national economy, .developing the sector should be central to government and public administration. Unfortunately, over the years, the developmental strategies and efforts in Nigeria have been more urban based or focused, resulting in relative neglect of the rural areas as evidenced in the glaring dearth of basic infrastructural facilities in the rural areas (Abah, 2010). Indeed, as Okoli and Onah (2002) observe, the rural areas in Nigeria are characterized by inadequacies of human needs as reflected in the near absence of some basic infrastructure with its attendant features of degradation and deprivation. Ezeah (2005:3) has written that:

The Nigerian rural areas are neglected areas, even though social amenities are also not adequate in some urban areas. The situation in the rural areas today is far worse and many communities lack basic amenities like good roads, markets, electricity, and pipe borne water etc.

In the same vein, Abonyi and Nnamani (2011:255) have pointed out that:

"Today, rural poverty persists in Nigeria despite the prosperity created by the country's wealth, and this is evident in the difficulty experienced by many in satisfying their basic needs for food, water and shelter.

Lack of these basic needs has held rural development in Nigeria to ransom" very curious and worrisome still is that even the few policies and programs initiated and implemented by government of the day over the years have not yielded or resulted in meaningful enhancement of the development of the rural areas in Nigeria (Ezeah, 2005). These efforts have among others, included the institutionalization of the local governments to serve as agents for enhancing grassroots development, the establishment of the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DIFRRI) to enhance infrastructural development in the rural areas; the establishment of River Basin and Rural Development Authorities; the establishment of Rural water scheme, the establishment of rural electrification scheme, the establishment of Better Life for Rural Women Programme others include: the establishment of National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the establishment of millennium Development Project through Rural Infrastructure, Micro Finance Banking to enhance the availability of financial services to the rural poor, low income earners and the rural dwellers (Ajadi, 2010) Olarenwaju (1992:14) even argues that rather than these policies enhance rural development, they tended to further under develop them because:

"The manner in which rural development has been conceived by the successive Nigerian governments and the type of rural development policies that have been implemented over time in the country have contributed substantially to the current poor state of the rural economy?

It is against the foregoing that we consider it necessary to draw attention to the rural development institutions in agriculture, water supply agencies, roads and electricity, to critically examine the impediments in realizing the needed enhancement in the development of these sectors and to explore necessary policy actions or measure that would fast track the development process of the Nigerian rural sector.

Conceptualization of terms

To create a context for a clear appreciation of the discussion and analysis, the following two major or central concepts of the study are clarified below:

Development: Development is a household concept in both the developed and developing countries. It is however, conceptualized variously by different people. Some take it to mean change while some see it as an advancement improvement or progress. To others yet development entails modernization or westernization (Ele, 2006). For instance development, in the view of Porters (1975) entails transformation, advancement to a better and desired state. Similarly, Okoli and Onah (2002) assert that development involves-.progression, movement and advancement towards something better. They emphasized further that the movement should be on both the material and non-material aspect of life. In essence, development goes beyond social and economic indicators to include improvement of human resources and positive change in their behavior. In any case, the prevailing conception of development connotes essentially enhancement in the well-being of people (Okoye, 2006). Indeed, basic to any development process is man's desire to a better environment (Oyevbaire & Odagunja, 1992). So development is perhaps one social phenomenon that is desired and craved for by every society, group or community.

Rural Development: Deriving from what development generally is, rural development is then that part that seeks to enhance the quality of life in the rural areas by providing basic infrastructural facilities (Ezeah, 2005). Indeed, the basic objective of rural development is reduction in poverty and improvement of the quality of life of the rural people. Bello-Imam (1998) has defined rural development as spatially sectional but determined and conscious attempt to focus on the general upliftment of the living conditions of men in the rural areas. So, rural development in Nigeria today entails the process of making life more satisfying and fulfilling to the millions of Nigerians who live in the rural areas. Olayiwole and Adeleye (2005) availability of good roads, water (pipe born water) rural electricity, storage and processing of agricultural produce are some of the infrastructural requirements in rural areas. Oladipo (2008) observes that for rural development to occur and endure, there has to be enhanced rural income, reduced poverty and unemployment, reduced inequalities, enhanced quality life through portable water, electricity and good roads, greater integration of rural people into the socio-economic process and good telecommunication services, and of course fruitful agricultural practice.

Theoretical Perspective/Framework

This study is basically anchored on two theories namely: The trickle-down theory and the pole growth theory. A brief description follows: The infrastructural approach to rural development is one method commonly used by most third world countries. Abumere (2002) defined rural infrastructure to include the system of physical, human, and institutional forms of capital which enables rural -residents to better perform their production, processing and distribution activities, as well as help to improve to overall quality of life. Some of these infrastructures are roads communication network, irrigation, storage facilities, market facilities, research and extension institutions, schools and universities which train and turn out a variety of skilled agricultural workers.

Rural infrastructure can be better understood as those specialized "elements" in the development process that bring about improvement in the socio-economic welfare of the rural dwellers. They are catalysts of development, and at the same time their presence can be an indicator of the level of development. On the other hand, the presence of certain types of infrastructure classified as social, education, and utilities need to be combined to bring significant improvement in the life of the people.

Be it physical, social or institutional, the historical premise of the infrastructural

approach to rural development is predicated on a modernization theory called trickle- down theory of development. It is a general economic model of the American economist A.O. Hirschman (1958). According to this theory growth is supposed to trickle down from the core, which emerges, through polarization. The forces of concentration were collectively referred to by Hirschman as polarization. The term polarization is actually the process of spatial concentration of resources into cyber core. He argued that polarization should be viewed as an inevitable characteristic of the early stages of economic development. According to him, the corollary or sectorally unbalanced growth is geographically uneven development, and he specifically cited Perroux's (1955) idea of natural growth pole. The crucial argument, however, eventually development in the core will lead to the "trickling-down" of growth-inducing tendencies to backwash regions. The implication of this is that government should not intervene to reduce inequalities. Hirschman's approach is therefore set in the traditional liberal model of letting the market decide.

Most of those who perceive development as a process whereby societies or social institutions change or move from traditional or less developed conditions to more complex and impersonal conditions are modernization scholars. Oyeleye (1987) conceived rural development as involving the process of trickling-down .of modem infrastructural facilities and ideas from the more developed urban areas to rural areas, i.e. a process of the exportation of urbanization to rural communities. Abumere (2002) stresses that if rural development is defined as a strategy designed to improve the economic, social and cultural life of the poor rural dweller, then the definition connotes that the inputs of agents development (good roads, portable water, electricity supply, etc) into the rural areas must be carefully thought out and delivered in a consistent manner. This is regardless of whether these agents of improvement, physically move from the rural area, or vice-versa.

Majority of the existing theories and models of rural development focus attention mainly on structural aspects of rural development. The theory of trickle-down growth and development is relatively similar to the growth pole/growth centre theory. However in studies such as this one, some scholars consider the growth pole theory or model to be more appropriate. This is largely because Perroux (1955, 1971) and Living Stones (1971) growth pole concept and growth centre lie at the core of current regional planning and forms a larger proportion of regional planning action. A fact strongly affirmed by Alden and Morgan (1974) as well as Friedman and Weaver (1979). In the words of Perroux "growth does not appear everywhere at the same time. It manifests itself in points or poles of growth with variable intensities. It spreads by different channels and with variable terminal effects for the economy as a whole". Hence, a pole is recognized to be a point in abstract economic space to which centripetal forces are attracted and from which (in time) centrifugal forces emanate throughout the field of influence of the set of activities constituting the pole. One major factor influencing structural differentiation and is the key industry. Later, further modifications of the concept permitted a growth pole to mean simply the geographical clustering of economic activity in general. This implies that spatial concentration is more efficient and more growth inducing. According to Okafor and onokeryoraye (1986) one of the main advantages of this model as a tool of spatial analysis and planning of rural development relates to its total coverage of the national space economy, thus embracing both urban and rural development and actually seeing this in an integrated way. Such a system of spatial development within the space economy of any country will counteract the splintering of functions and parasitic development (Ayeni, 1980).

Rural development institution and agriculture in Nigeria

Agriculture which involves domestication of plants and animals was developed around 12,000 years ago although earlier people began altering communities of flora and fauna for their own benefit through other means such as fire-stick farming prior to that. Agriculture has undergone significant development since time of the earliest cultivation. The fertile/crescent of western Asia Egypt and India were sites of the earliest planned sowing and harvesting of plants that had previously been gathered in the wild. Independent development of agriculture occurred in the northern and southern China, Africa's Sahel, New Guinea, parts of India and several regions of the Americas. Agricultural techniques such as irrigation, crop rotation, the application of fertilizer were developed soon after Neolithic Revolution but have made significant strides in the past 200 years. The Haber-Bosch method for synthesizing ammonium nitrate represented a major breakthrough and allowed crop yields to overcome previous constraints.

In the past century, agriculture in the developed nations and to a lesser extent in the developing world has been characterized by enhanced productivity, the replacement of human labour by synthetic fertilizer and pesticides, selective breeding and mechanization. The recent history of agriculture has been closely tied with a range of issues including water, biofuels, genetically modified organisms, tariffs, and farm subsidies. There has been a backlash against the environmental effects of mechanized agriculture, and increasing support the organic movement and sustainable agriculture.
Agriculture is the science or practice of farming including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the reaping for animals to provide food, wool and other products. Agriculture can also be defined as the systematic and controlled use of living organisms and the environment to improve human condition. Agricultural land is the land base upon which agriculture is practiced. Agriculture came to be the moment we stopped chasing our food and start cultivating it.

Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) as an institution of rural agriculture. Were established to increase farm production and welfare among stakeholders in Nigeria. The concept was designed in response to a fall in agricultural productivity and a concern to sustain domestic food supplies as human resource had moved out of agriculture into more lucrative activities that were benefiting from oil boom. Conversely, domestic recycling of oil income provided the opportunity for the government to develop the ADPs. The projects provided agricultural investment and services. Other objectives of rural agriculture include:

- Increase in food production and farm income.
- For sustainable management of natural resources and climate action
- Ensure a fair standard of living for the agric community
- To stabilize the market
- To balance territorial development
- Ensure food security/agricultural productivity
- Check rural-urban migrations,

Benefits of Rural Agriculture

- Source of raw material for local industries
- Source of employment
- Food security
- Contributes to national wealth

Challenges of Rural Agriculture

- Relative neglect of agricultural policies by successive governments,,
- Ineffective implementation of agricultural policies, projects and programs Rural-urban migration
- Poor commitment of the political representatives towards enhancing the development for agriculture in their rural constituencies
- Deplorable road network and absence of all year-round access road for the transportation of farm produce.
- Rural agriculture is not mechanized hence low output

Development of rural water supply agencies in Nigeria

Water, next to air is the most important need of man. Despite of the considerable investment of governments in Nigeria over the years in this essential human requirement, a substantial Nigerian population does not have access to adequate quantity and quality of water. It is estimated that only 48% of the inhabitants of the urban and semi-urban areas of Nigeria and 39% of rural areas have access to portable water supply. Of these low figures the average delivery to the urban population is only 32 liters per capital per day (1ped) and that of rural areas is 10 liters per capita per day (1ped). The quality in most cases is suspect. Various reasons are responsible for this situation and they include: poor planning, inadequate funding insufficient relevant manpower, haphazard implementation, and above all the lack of national policy for water supply, especially in rural areas.

From a historical point of view, public water supply started in Nigeria early in this century in a few towns under the management of the lowest administrative level. Amongst the early beneficiaries of these facilities were Lagos, Calabar, Kano, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ijebu Ode and Enugu. These schemes were maintained with revenue from water rate collection with virtually no operational subvention from government. With the creation of Regional Governments in early 1950s the water supply undertakings continued to maintain the schemes but the financial and technical responsibilities for developing new water schemes were taken over by the Regional Government who also assigned supervisory high level man power (Water Engineers and Superintendents) to the water supply undertakings. For the period of the assignment, all the allowances and part of the salaries of these officers were paid from revenue generated from their water rate, while these officers still retained their employment and seniority in the regional service. However, with the growing demand and increasing cost, it became necessary for the Regional Government, to be cure loans. The Regions were requested to set up independent bodies i.e. water corporations/boards to develop, operate and manage water supply undertakings. Hence, the first water corporation was formed in 1966 by the then western Region with all the public water supply undertakings in the region, including their staff, assets and liabilities taken over by the water corporation. Workers were drawn from the Division of the Ministry of works to the new water corporation.

Today all the thirty (36) states of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory have Water Boards/Corporations or utilities Board managing their public water supply undertakings. Their efforts are supplemented in many cases by Local Governments who supply water to small villages in their areas of jurisdiction.

The Federal Government, in 1976, got involved in water supply when the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and the eleven (11) River Basin Development Authorities

(RBDAs) were created to manage the water resources of the country and to provide bulk water, primarily for irrigation and water supply. The Federal Government Ministries also undertake basic Hydrological Data collection and storage for National Planning purposes. Other agencies involved in public water supply, as aid and loan programmes, are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), and a number of other bilateral, multilateral and External Support Agencies.
It is left to be said that water is a transparent fluid which forms the world's streams, lakes, Oceans and rain, and is the major constituent of the fluids of living things. Water is the most essential element to life on earth. A rural water scheme is defined a simple scheme serving less than 500people.

Source of Water: There are three main sources of water namely-rain water, surface water and ground water.

Rain Water: Rain water is derived from rainfall. It is the purest water in nature. Physically, it is clear, bright and sparkling.

Surface Water: Surface water is found in oceans, rivers, tanks, ponds and lakes; it originates from rain and is the main source of supply in many areas. Surface water is prone to contamination from humans and animal sources.

Ground Water: Ground water is found in shallow wells, deep wells and springs. Ground water is rainwater that percolates into the ground. It is used mainly by humane and comes mainly from land. It is the cheapest and most practical of providing water to communities, mostly rural communities.

Rural Water Supply: About 71% of those living in rural communities do not have access to safe drinking water supply. Many entities involved in rural water supply include the following: Federal Ministry of Water Resources, State Water Agencies, River Basin Development Authorities, Local Governments, and External Support Agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank, CIDA and ZONTA International etc. These institutions employ their implementation strategies and involve individual communities and LGAs to varying degrees. In most cases, however, services have been introduced with little or no community involvement. The Local Government Authorities are responsible for the provision of portable water to rural communities in their areas of jurisdiction. However, because of the lack of funds and the gross shortage of manpower, this function has not been effectively carried out in some local government areas of the country.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Scheme has been into provision of rural water by sinking bore holes in communities. Although the scheme has less than 500 days to achieve its target, some MDG project in water supply is visible in some communities. Politicians also sink boreholes in rural communities, though some of them barely emit any drop of water.

Uses and Importance of Rural Water Supply

- **Water** is used for irrigation farming during dry season which makes it possible for all year round farming.
- **Fishing:** Some rural communities are predominantly fishermen. Fishing is the

bedrock of their economic survival especially in riverine areas.

- **Sanitation and healthy living:** Drinking water that is sage promotes and enhance the sanitation and healthy of the community.
- **Fish Farming:** Water is used for breeding fish as an economic venture.
- **Transportation:** Water transport is common in rural communities in the riverine communities. Water transport is also common where there are rivers as in River Benue, Niger etc.
- **Lumbering:** Water helps in conveying large logs of wood for timber or lumbering industry along coastal communities where such activities are carried out.
- **Water is used for household work** it is also used in industry such as beverage making industry, confectionaries, house hold industry etc.

Challenges of Rural Water Supply

- Lack of funds by the local government to generate, treat and supply water to rural communities.
- **Topography:** Some areas are hilly and rocky that the water level is not easy to access.
- Government policies over the years have not been successful in addressing problems associated with rural water supply.
- **Power:** Epileptic supply of electricity to .water treatment plants for pumping water is a constraint, especially rural communities what does not have electricity.

Rural Roads and Electricity

Rural roads include Federal State and Local Government roads (major feeder, tracks, foot paths bridges and culverts) found in the rural areas. Rural roads constitute the most critical infrastructure in the rural area and by extension development drive. Contributions of rural roads to socio-economic development include: accelerated delivery of farm inputs and evacuation of produce, reduction in the cost of transportation in terms of human energy, cost of patronage and time loss in trekking long distances and facilitating more efficient distribution of goods and serves from different locations.

Rural roads are constructed by local government in rural communities to link one community to another. These roads are usually not tarred, but graded to pave way and ease movement of tractors, vehicles and commuters.

Rural Electricity (Electrification)

Just like rural water supply, roads, rural electrification is quite a basic institution in rural development. It helps to arrest emigration of the youths, men and even rural women. Rural electrification involves connecting the rural communities to the national grid. Unfortunately over the years the power sector saddled with the responsibility of generating and distributing electricity NEPA now PHCN has been struggling to achieve its mandate. This trend has forced many industries to shut down, affecting the national economy negatively.

Lack of funds has also been the bane of rural electrification. Some local governments and state governments have been able to electrify some rural communities, but most rural communities lack this public utility.

Imperative measures for enhancing rural development in Nigeria - agriculture, water supply, roads and electricity

- Rural development should be placed on top of the agenda of national development in realization of the fact that enhanced rural development is a prerequisite for meaningful and sustainable overall national development.
- Government needs to de-emphasize total dependence on one oil sector to enhance agricultural development through addressing the needs of rural farmers with functional incentives.
- Leaders need to identify with development needs of rural communities concerning agriculture, roads and provision of social amenities such as water and electricity
- There is equally the need not only to increase budgetary allocation for rural development but very importantly, in ensuring that such allocated funds are judiciously used to execute rural development programmes.
- There is need for monitoring and integrating of the various national, state and local government policies and programmes.
- Local governments saddled with the task of developing rural communities need to eschew corruption and emphasize, accountability, due process, prudence and diligence.

Conclusion

This paper has drawn attention to the issue of rural development in Agriculture, water supply, roads and electricity examining the impediments to enhancement of the rural development and proffered solutions towards improving rural communities. Rural areas of Nigeria are characterized by lack of basic infrastructure and are generally undeveloped. In order to alleviate these problems we recommend that:

- State governments should allocate more funds in their annual budget for rural agriculture and other infrastructure
- Government should put in place monitoring and evaluation unit to ensure standard, performance and accountability in its project implementation.
- Finally, there should be a comprehensive strategy that will eliminate disparities that exist within LGA's institutions.

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