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## Promoting Sustainable Economic Development in Nigeria: An Evaluation of the Rural Sector (1976-2017)

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper examines critically the Promotion of the Economic and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: with particular reference to the rural sector. The past and present efforts of the Nigerian Governments on rural industrialization and development as a panacea for sustainable development and poverty reduction in the country have been evaluated in this paper. Empirical, theoretical examinations and analyses of the various efforts of the previous and present administrations of the Federal Government of Nigeria indicate that "Bad Governance" and "policy inconsistency" as well as "corruption" had remained the bane of all attempts at rural and sustainable development in Nigeria. The study reveals that rural development in Nigeria since 1976 -2017 had remained a paradox, because the more efforts the government claims to make on rural development the worse the level of poverty in the rural areas turns out to be. It is advisable to point out that from the various reviews in this study that the best solution to tackling Nigeria's rural under development is for the present government in the country to ensure good governance and policy consistency that bring about sustainable development. Equally, corruption should be tackled head long at its roots by all the tiers of governments to allow for effective rural sustainable development in Nigeria. Finally, integrated rural development strategy should be employed by all tiers of government and other rural development agencies and / or stakeholder for effective realization of sustainable development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Rural development, rural Sector, Economic Development Sustainable development, Government, Programme, Nigeria

### **1. Introduction**

Rural development in the world generally and in the third world in particular has assumed the front-burner status since early eighties because governments have realized that except given the seriousness it deserves and closing the gap between theory and practice in this area, the goals of achieving accelerated national development especially at the rural level which is the grassroots base, will remain elusive at least in the third world. One major reason for this assertion is that taking Nigeria as an example, the bulk of the population lives in the rural areas, which is the grassroots where development is most desirous. Apart from this lopsided population ratio, the bulk of the rural areas are poor and hardly live above the poverty line of one American dollar per day. More importantly, development is measured mostly on the scale of per capita income of nations, which is the ratio of the gross national income to entire population. Therefore, the development of rural areas signals to a greater extent the level of national development and the situation of the nations in the development ladder.

Buttressing this assertion, Idode (1989), citing a portion of the 1975-80 Nigeria National Development Plan stated that:

It is necessary to recognize that about 70% of the Nigerian population live in the rural areas and have benefited relatively little from the rapid economic growth of the past few years. The improvement in the welfare of the average Nigerian will therefore require substantial increase in rural income. Accordingly, in the allocation of scarce resources, in the course of plan implementation, priority will be given to programmes and projects directly benefiting the rural population, particularly projects to increase the income of small holder farmers and to improve the economic and social infrastructure to the rural area.

There is therefore, reason to believe that the question of how to accelerate expansion in the r sector and how best to improve welfare for the masses of the people in the rural areas is now the focus of considerable government attention. It is however sad to observe that from the time of the first major local government reforms in 1976 to date, there has been a great disparity between successive government pronouncements and the establishment of various development agencies towards

attaining rural development and sustainable development in Nigeria. In the light of the above background this paper seeks to evaluate the promotion of the economic and sustainable development in Nigeria with rural sector in mind from 1976 to 2015.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. *Integrated Rural Development Theory (Networks Paradigm)*

A proposed theoretical solution to bridge the perceived challenges in rural and sustainable development is to harness the rural development potential of networked relationships (Woolcock, 1998 and Collier 2000). However, this new understanding of networks is somewhat different from that used in endogenous development theory to describe a relationship between local firms and social actors, based on trust, reciprocity and mutual understanding that lay the foundations for local economic development. Instead, the network paradigm seeks to establish a 'third way' (Putnam, 1993) or synthesis between endogenous (local, bottom-up) and exogenous (extra-local, top-down) links in order to foster learning and innovation processes. These are deemed to be central to economic growth by many authors (Granovetter, 1985; Coleman, 1988 and Putnam, 1993). From their work, it appears that networks offer the most appropriate means through which to deliver innovation and learning. Powell (1990) argues that it is the open-ended, relational features of networks that facilitates transfer and learning of new knowledge and skills. However, bringing back some elements from the earlier understanding of networks, others say that these goals prove easier to accomplish in flexible networks that are built on trust (Birner and Wittmer, 2000).

Woolcock, (1998) sees networks as sets of power relations where power lies in the links that bind the actors and entities together. Birner and Wittmer, (2000) follow this perspective to identify the asymmetries of power and hence the inequalities in the benefits gained by local firms as a result of networks. Others state that: "a network is generally defined as a specific type of relation linking a defined set of persons, objects or events... Different types of relations identify different networks. The structure of relations among actors and the location of individual actors in the network have important behavioural, perceptual and attitudinal consequences both for the individual units and for the system as a whole, (Collier, 1998; Bastiaensen et al., 2002). Essentially the network provides a good framework for analysis. Some commentators go further to suggest that networks should be perceived as key aspects of innovation and their existence or non-existence can be a key determinant in success or failure (Morgan and Collier 1998). As yet though there is little empirical evidence from rural areas relating to the role of networks in facilitating learning and innovation. Proponents of the approach refer to the same set of examples in support of their perspective, largely in review articles. Nevertheless, from these few cases, the potential transfer of lessons has inspired many academics to analyse the importance of such networks.

The crucial issue, as Birner and Wittmer, (2000) suggest, is the balance of 'internal' and 'external' elements. Therefore, the contribution of networks is to focus our "attention upon successful mixtures of 'internal' and 'external' economic linkages. Unlike the idea of the 'district', which tends to concentrate on local or 'bottom-up' development, the notion of 'network' forces us to identify how local and non-local linkages facilitate success?" Even though some networks might prove to be "regionally specific", they are likely, particularly in the EU context to be "linked into complex relations with other organisations outside the region". In this way, the network paradigm provides a dynamic and flexible structure to integrate the internal and external factors that will promote greater innovation and improved rural development even in remote areas. The difficulties are to strike a balance between continuity of routines and creative change and between internal and external involvement.

To clarify these questions, Collier (2000) seeks to identify the role of networks in the formulation of rural development strategies. For this he identifies two axes of networks: vertical and horizontal. Vertical networks are political economic interdependencies that are formed with rural businesses as a result of the food chain. Working examples of these networks can be found in the 'hot-spots' of European agricultural and food industries, where intensive production and processing (organised into vertical integration often by multinational companies) has been and is likely to remain the most influential factor for the local economy. Horizontal networks are spatially determined and imply the co-ordination of a range of activities in a local area, facilitating access to markets. This entails "a strengthening of local productive capabilities in ways that benefit the rural economy as a whole" (Collier, 2000: 412). Examples of these networks can be found in successful rural districts, where network-based local development could create a sound basis for competition in the global economy, without significant external intervention.

Nevertheless, Collier (2000) - rejecting the network paradigm as the 'third way for rural development' - does not choose to link these two networks together into an integrated system, but rather just highlights where these networks are useful. He differentiates three types of reality. The first type ("clusters of innovation") is dominated by horizontal networks, small- and medium-sized enterprises, trustful relationships and co-operation – such as the 'Third Italy'. He suggests that in these areas the literature on innovation networks and learning regions is applicable and can demonstrate how economic success can be maintained. The second type ("hotspots of standardisation") is dominated by vertical networks, intensive forms of agricultural production and trans-national networks of the food sector. These areas can develop their economic and social structure based on mainly endogenous resources and can penetrate global markets with their products. However, as suggested by Collier, in these areas the new 'network paradigm' is not applicable, development and socio-economic processes can better be explained with commodity chain analysis. In the third type of rural areas neither horizontal nor vertical networks work effectively. These areas (much of European rurality) have lost their resources during the industrialization

period and have become reliant on continued state assistance (in terms of both agricultural and non-agricultural support). These areas have little or no chance to improve their situation based on endogenous resources and need external intervention through rural development agencies. As stated by Collier, intervention complying with the network paradigm (support in capacity building, empowerment, soft infrastructure, etc.) is not necessarily appropriate in these areas, since it might reinforce existing weaknesses. Thus, besides the provision of 'soft infrastructure', other more traditional state support should also be applied.

Another study by Williams, (1978) offers a different typology of rural areas, according to the degree of their integration into the global economy. Three areas of rural diversity are outlined: integrated, intermediate and remote. In economically integrated rural areas there is a broad range of technically advanced firms that possess the capacity to support vertically integrated networks and supplier networks, even without government encouragement. Nevertheless, since services, expertise and capital are easy to access in these areas, firms may not view horizontal networks to be as critical as in less populated areas. In intermediate areas, although blessed with some diversity of production, there are likely to be stronger links between firms in the dominant sector, usually linked to commodity production. Traditional agricultural cooperatives choose to establish processing and marketing measures collectively. However, other firms outside traditional vertical networks may choose to form their own networks to provide better information, reduce transaction costs or to enter new markets. Remote rural areas are the least likely to develop networks, but when they do, based on strong local connections, it often provides for better external linkages to other firms and customers outside their region. The study argues that the network approach offers many opportunities for rural development, such as: adding value; creating economies of scale and scope; diversifying regional economies and creating synergy among micro-enterprises.

As stated by many authors, the state (or the political/economic centre) has a role to play in promoting rural development: encouraging the development of networks, entrepreneurial culture, assisting with economic transformation and providing resources to enhance co-operation between local actors. It may be appropriate for government to intervene at various points in the vertical network. However, in remote areas where vertical networks have been unsuccessful in making a contribution to local rural development in the past, what sort of government intervention can stimulate the growth of successful networks for joint learning and knowledge transfer to allow successful innovation and development in the future? According to the Williams, (1978) this may be accomplished through four measures:

- Direct aid targets specific enterprises and provides assistance in the form of subsidies, aid for technological innovation, training and job creation;
- Indirect aid is defined to strengthen the overall economic environment of a local area for the benefit of existing firms. In providing services to facilitate technology transfer, marketing assistance and dissemination of information, it is likely to be the most effective general rural development tool;
- Enhancing human resources entails policies and programmes that aim to improve levels of education and training amongst the workforce and to encourage entrepreneurial behaviour; and
- Infrastructure programmes that usually involve the construction of roads, sewers, telephone lines and public buildings. The provision of infrastructure should increase the level of services and amenities available to the local population and aid the establishment of economic enterprises.

Formal institutions need to identify important links to the development potential offered at the local level. This has been considered important by Collier, (1998) in his study of remote rural areas around the Mediterranean. He identifies several variables that support local economic capacities. These include:

- Achievement of market position – avoiding dependence on state funding
- Self-reliance of local actors – due to the local and small-scale nature of firms
- Firms should control production, processing and marketing in house
- Use of available local resources: natural, biological and human in production
- Producer group cohesion and solidarity supporting the promotion of images of local quality of products.
- The positive interaction between local and outside institutions in interventions.
- The successful generation of local development often required grants, investments, technical assistance and co ordination from outside the target area.

### 3. Conceptual Clarification of Rural Development

The word "rural" means different thing to different people. The American Bureau of Census classifies a group of people living in a community having a population of not more than 2,500 people as rural, whereas in Nigeria, the Federal Office of Statistics defines a community with less than 20,000 people rural.

Generally speaking, according to Afolayan (1995), rural areas are easily identified by other various criteria, apart from population. Such criteria include:

- Level of infrastructural development i.e. road networks, educational institutions, water supply, electricity, health facilities, communication, etc. The rural area lacks most if not all of these infrastructures and where they are available the quality as well as quantity is usually below desirable standard;
- Occupational differentiation: Most rural dwellers earn their living by engaging in subsistent agriculture production;

- Housing: Housing in rural areas is generally below the standard an average person will be proud of;
- Extent of community planning: Community development activities in the rural areas are often carried out with little or no planning at all, such that future development activities cannot be undertaken without interfering with the existing structures;
- Arising from the combination of the above factors is a characteristic abject poverty when related to the economic buoyancy of urban centers.

Rural development has therefore been described in different ways by different authors, depending on the discipline or line of thought of the person concerned. This is because the subject of rural development is multidisciplinary and the definition of such author will depend on the area where he/she focuses attention. But all definitions have a central theme, which is "improvement of living conditions of the rural people". What the different definitions do is to lay emphasis on the process of getting the central objective of rural development achieved. Here we shall look at a few definitions.

Aslam (1981) defined the concept as "a process aimed at developing the rural poor, their economy and institutions from a state of stagnation or low productivity equilibrium into dynamic process leading to higher levels of living and better quality of life." Similarly, Nwankwo (2009) conceived rural development as "developing the skill of the masses to make them self-reliant through instruction which supply appropriate and relevant knowledge on the methods of self-help". It can be seen that the above definitions, coming from training specialists, tend to lay emphasis on the development of human resources while the following definition taken from a World Bank publication focuses attention on the development of the environment rather than human beings.

Rural development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people, the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless (Aliy, 1999). Taken together, available definitions emphasize the central point that rural development is about promoting the welfare and productivity of rural communities, about the scope and quality of participation of rural people in that process, and about the structure, organization, operations and interactions and facilities which make this possible.

The term "accelerated rural development" involves integrating all efforts on rural development to ensure effective and speedy attainment of stated objectives. It is an integrated approach to rural development which has to do with putting the entire act together, with clarifying the objectives and bringing all the agencies, facilities and programmes involved into a common framework of action for the attainment of the objectives.

The "sustainability of rural development" refers to long-term human and material sustenance. It is the continued existence of programmes long after their establishment. Sustainability is central to all rural development effort. Without it, investments in the rural development effort are short lived and of no effect.

A programme's results are called sustainable if they are utilized by the direct recipients after the completion of the programme without further external assistance.

#### 4. An Overview of Rural Development Efforts in Nigeria

Since political independence in 1960, various Nigeria governments have adopted various strategies and methods at developing the rural areas of the country. However, Ikotun (2002) noted that in spite of colossal amount of money that have gone into implementing rural development programmes and the proliferation of rural development agencies one after the other, not much impact has been made. He went further to state that in spite of pious official pronouncements, and declaration of intentions as contained in the development plans, at the end of each plan period rural life remained unchanged. Each plan came with new promises and raised hopes that were never fulfilled. The First National Development Plan, 1962-1968 for example had as its priority, agriculture (considered as synonymous with rural development) but capital budget and expenditure on agriculture during the plan period was only 42 percent. The Second Development Plan, 1970-1974 had as its main thrust, the attainment of a just and egalitarian society and claimed to place high premium on reduction of inequality among social groups and between urban and rural areas. These noble objectives notwithstanding, this aspect of the plan was partially executed. It is significant to note also that it was only during the Third National Development Plan, 1975-1980 that attempts were made to engage in what has been referred to as "integrated rural development". This refers to the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPS) that were sponsored by the World Bank. It is to be noted that in spite of the active involvement of the World Bank in the ADPs, for which the country has taken loans worth billions of Naira, the country has continued to be deficient in food production and the standard of living of the people, especially in the rural areas still very low.

Thus, as far back as early 1970s, rural development has been identified as a strategy for improving the economic and social life of the rural poor in Nigeria since then, successive governments at various levels have embarked on several programmes aimed at rural development. Some of the development programmes established under development agencies since independence to date, apart from the National Development Plan stated above, can be broadly listed as:

- Operation Feed the Nation (OFN);
- The Universal Primary Education Scheme (UPE);
- The Low-Cost Housing Scheme;
- Adult Education Scheme;
- Rural Electrification Scheme;

- Rural Banking Schemes;
- Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs);
- River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs);
- Rural Water Supply Schemes;
- Credit schemes to small holders through various specialized institutions;
- Transports Schemes;
- Health Schemes such as Sanitary, Immunization, Primary Health Care, etc.;
- The National Better Life Rural Women Programme;
- Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reconstruction (MAMSER);
- National Orientation Agency (NOA);
- National Agricultural Land and Development Agency (NALDA);
- Research Programme;
- Artesian Fishery and Small Ruminant Production Programme;
- Pasture and Grazing Reserves;
- Accelerated Crop Production Scheme;
- The National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP);
- Primary Health Care Programmes;

Specifically, however since early 1980s, rural development agencies that were in place include:

- The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI);
- The National Directorate of Employment (NDE);
- Disease Eradication Scheme;
- Expanded Programme on Immunization;
- Basic Primary Education Scheme (BPES);
- The Nomadic Education Programme;
- The Migrant Fishermen Scheme;
- Adult Support Basic Education Programme;
- Federal Assisted Mass Transit Scheme;
- State Assisted Transport Scheme;
- Ferry Transport Schemes (in the Riverine areas and Lagos);
- Low-Cost Housing Estate Scheme;
- Federal Environmental Protection Agency;
- Flood and Soil Erosion Control Programme;
- People's Bank;
- Community Banks;
- National Agricultural Insurance Company (NAIC);
- Nation Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON); and
- Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), etc.
- N-Power Programme

## 5. Rural Development in Nigeria

The development of rural areas impacts positively on per capita income and food production. Rural development leads to decrease in the disparity between rural and urban incomes thereby reducing rural-urban migration. It would also bring about an increase in the level of employment; improvement in the balance of payment position; increase in both foreign and domestic private investment, and an improvement in infrastructural facilities available in the hinterlands. In essence, with development, the rural and hence national economy is transformed from one which is preponderantly agro-rural based.

Rural development can be defined as the outcome of a series of quantitative and qualitative changes occurring among a given rural population and whose converging effects indicate, in time, a rise in the standard of living and favourable changes in the way of life of the people concerned. Olatunbosun (1976), Williams (1978), Lele (1979) and Idachaba (1980) viewed rural development from various perspectives. They all pointed to the need for improvement in rural living conditions and standard of living of the rural populace. Olatunbosun (1976) stated that rural development is based on the need to balance the pattern and direction of government for the benefit of both the urban and rural sectors and provide technical requirements for speeding up economic growth in the development.

Despite the realisation of the above facts and the huge resources committed to rural development in Nigeria, rural development still remains a mirage simply because the local government authorities who are saddled with the responsibilities have not been able to perform up to expectation.

## 6. Imperatives for Sustainable Development in Nigeria Rural Sector

Small-scale farmers inundate the agricultural landscape, producing about 85 per cent of the total output (Okuneye, 1997). These resource poor farmers are characterised by a strong dependence on agricultural labour market, little or no savings or storage facilities and labour intensive cultural practices. The socioeconomic and production characteristics of the farmers, inconsistent and unfocussed government policies and the poor infrastructural base all interact to asphyxiate the sector, resulting in low production, high prices of food items, inflation, underdevelopment and concomitant poverty.

Economic deregulation in Nigeria has in a very short time brought about a reduction in household income levels and to this effect, the livelihood patterns of most rural households have remained more deplorable (Mbanasor, 1999). On the national level, per capita growth of production of major foods in Nigeria has not been sufficient to satisfy the demands of an increasing population (Kormawa, 1999). The result is a big gap between national supply and national demand for food. Progress in the agricultural sector has also remained unsatisfactory (Abdulahi, 1999). Common staples in most Nigerian homes are insufficient and do not provide a balanced diet, as commonly manifested in the level of malnutrition which is prevalent in most homes. Besides, this food deficit has led to massive importation of foods and massive foreign debt (CBN, 1996; 1999 and Makinde, 2000). A positive upturn however is that processes are on to have the debts written off and repaid.

Increase in food demand generated by the growth of cities and expansion of transport capacity has been a major driving force of agricultural production and modernisation through the 1990s in Nigeria. Lately, however, the rural areas have been left with a demographically unbalanced population of women, younger children and older people (FAO, 2003).

The development situation in rural areas can be summarized thus:

- There is a relative shortage of social and economic infrastructure in the rural areas, as compared to the urban.
- The migration of the (educated) workforce to the urban areas and the consequent ageing of the rural population have led to a decline in the relative proportion of the population that constitutes the agricultural workforce.
- Low productivity of rural (and especially agricultural) production, due partly to limited access to credit, pesticides, extension services support, and modern technology for agricultural production, processing and preservation severely hamper the ability of the rural sector to grow itself (FAO, 1989).

## 7. Policy Options for Sustainable Development in Rural Areas of Nigeria

Programmes embarked upon by the Federal Government with the aim of addressing sustainable and rural development related problems in Nigeria are numerous. These programmes include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Green Revolution and the establishment of the National Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA). The programmes set up specifically for rural development were the Farm Settlement Scheme, the River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDA), the Directorate of Food Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and the Family Economic Advancement Programmed (FEAP). Financial institutions like the Community and Peoples' banks were also established.

These past efforts all contributed in some way to growth in agricultural output. In spite of these achievements, however, pockets of low agricultural production persist in many areas. Such areas remain largely underdeveloped and unintegrated into the mainstream of national development. It is in a bid to redress this situation that the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was developed.

The NEEDS initiative was inaugurated in 2005 and outlines policies and strategies designed to promote economic growth in the country. The NEEDS strategy realises that agricultural and rural development are essential and that the major goals of NEEDS cannot be accomplished without rapid agricultural growth and broad rural development. A principal focus of the programme is the alleviation of the worsening rural poverty, rising unemployment rates among young people and the marginalisation of women. All this undoubtedly are much magnified in the rural areas as opposed to other places.

Some of the ways in which these objectives can be operationalised in the country are listed and discussed below:

Empowerment of the people through capacity building, training and participation in the political process: Programmes have to recognise the importance of empowering the people themselves to design and manage development efforts. Policies targeting poor, rural communities should include provision of credit and land, agricultural extension services and farm inputs. Additional priorities for the government would include the improvement of water and electricity supplies, rural roads, schools and health facilities for rural communities. These are of course much more effective when they originate from and are managed by the community.

Additional resources targeted to the poor through government programmes: It is almost impossible for the poor to escape the poverty trap without external intervention. This approach, with political will and sustained effort on many fronts, will help empower farmers and rural populations to manage their own investments, services and rural development programs, increase farm profits, savings and investments and help rural dwellers produce their own public and semi-public goods and services via community-driven development.

Economic policy reforms promoting private sector leadership in economic development and financial services for the rural poor: The market-driven global economy with its unequal standards is inevitability and the sooner the national agricultural sector comes to terms with this reality, the sooner it can be tackled head on. A most obvious strategy in this respect is the increased involvement of the private sector in facilities provision to rural farmers. This will ensure efficiency of resource use and timeliness and quality assurance in input supplies.

Synergising rural growth to the needs of the surrounding urban areas: Cities represent the largest and fastest growing market for farmers, in a context where over 90 per cent of total agricultural production is used for domestic consumption (World Bank, 1986). The distribution of the rural population is more and more determined by the size and location of the urban markets with the rural population density decreasing with the distance from the markets. Agricultural output per hectare and per rural inhabitant as well as the surplus per farmer of farm products available for marketing are thus a direct function of population density (World Bank, 1986). The areas of dense rural settlement, located in the proximity of the major markets, are therefore those which generate the highest farm surpluses per farmer, and by implication, the greater potential for economic growth.

Encouragement of rural livelihood diversification: Rural agricultural livelihoods are largely uncertain and unpredictable. Non-farm activities are diverse, partly seasonal and often performed within the family compound. They include agro-processing, snack and food production, transport, retail and household trade and tailoring. Non-farm activities account for as much as 60 per cent of cash income and an average of 36 per cent of adult working hours in the course of a year (Okali et al, 2001 and Akinleye et al, 2004). Farm and non-farm activities are more complimentary than competitive activities. The tendency to shift in and out of agriculture depends largely on the shifting profitability of agricultural production, which is affected by policy shifts and terms of trade. This is particularly the case with the upper stratum of farming households who have the resources to make timely and profitable changes (Maxwell and Frankenberger, 1992). The issue becomes more pertinent in view of the sub-urbanisation of industrial activities like paper mills, packaging and intensified home construction activities. Overt monitoring of the rural non-farm sector would lead to benefits for the rural community as a whole.

### **8. Challenges and/or Factors Hindering Rural Development Programmes in Nigeria**

One of the major factors that has contributed to the failure of rural development agencies to achieve their noble goal of poverty eradication in Nigeria today is the policy of the centralized control of the programmes of rural development set up by members of the elite who do not have the data available from the deprived social groups or even from the private sector. If the strategies adopted by government have to succeed, the Nigerian government would have to adopt a policy of efficient consultation and collaboration based on partnership, with the political communities. Such an arrangement would make it possible, on the one side, for the programmes to be mutually controlled by the authorities and the rural dwellers themselves, and, on the other side for the necessary responsibility and transparency. This has been the major preoccupation of many Non-Governmental Organizations and the International Agencies like the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and a host of other United Nations agencies in their position are partners in the poverty reduction programmes and donors as well as lenders to rural development projects in the third world.

Okafor (2003) in contributing to the search for viable solutions to the problem of stunted rural development in the third world opined that the relationship between governance and socio-economic development has become important that today, the international community (in particular the multilateral financial institutions) recognizes that the correction of the macro-economic imbalances, market reforms and trade liberalization are no longer enough to improve economic efficiency and promote sustainable rural development. The reality of today's world demands that the promotion of good government in all its ramifications should be the essential element of the frame in which the economy can prosper. These ramifications embrace for example respect for the rule of law, enhanced efficiency in and responsibility for the public sector, the reinforcement for the partnership between the private and public sectors and civil society; the enlargement of the mechanisms of decision-making.

The analysis of some of the programmes of government since independence in its rural development efforts to date as depicted above highlights their effects, which would explain why over 70 percent of the Nigerian populations still live below the poverty threshold. A survey by Okafor (2003), of 450 Nigerians randomly selected to represent all the strata of the society; revealed that the failure of the old poverty reduction and rural development programmes is mainly attributed to:

- Their weak political base and their personalization;
- The proliferation of projects with little, if any effort to harmonize and/or coordinate their activities.
- The lack of sustainability arising from the abandonment of programmes as soon as the Head of State, often its initiator, leaves office;
- A top-down approach to project formulation, rarely the bottom-up approach
- Little or no involvement of the Non-Governmental Organizations or other parties concerned in the development projects;
- The inadequate funding of the project.

Besides, the performance of the rural development agencies and programmes launched either by the agencies or government are almost always second-rate. The reasons suggested for this by Okafor (2003) include:

- The politicization of the programme by men in power;
- The poor "ownership" of the programme by over half the population (70%) which surely affects its attitude and involvement;
- The allegations that a large share of the fund, committed by the government has been misappropriated and fraudulently end up in private pockets, etc.

Lastly, the efficient tools of poverty eradication and rural development would be shared governance and a scenario in which all the parties involved (government, private sector, civil society and community development organizations) would take part in the decision-making process, as well as in the execution of the development programmes.

Akinleye et al (2006) identified some factors responsible for the non-performance in rural development. Listed below are some of the more important ones:

**Corruption:** This is a strong 'monster' ravaging the Nigerian economy. Though the LGs are not the only culprits when corruption is mentioned in Nigeria, it is expected that a government that is the closest to the grassroots should demonstrate low tendency to corrupt practices. On the contrary, resources for development programmes at the local level are mostly siphoned into private pockets. It is common to have roads appear on the LG record as tarred when the contrary is the case. Yet it is a known fact that bad roads are inimical to the rural economy.

**Top-down Approach to Development:** Rural people most of the time have little say in major decisions affecting their lives. They are rarely consulted on policy issues and investment decisions. In those instances when completed projects are handed over to them by the LGs, they derive little utility from them because it is a perceived need of the people by the LG and not the actual. In other instances, projects are not initiated transparently to solve rural problems but rather as a vehicle for siphoning money from the council account.

**Lack of Monitoring Mechanism:** LG staff are not transparent as they are not accountable to anyone. Moreover, their activities are neither monitored nor evaluated. The absence of very strong monitoring mechanism or process is a way of giving room for adequate mismanagement and misappropriation of resources which is what is witnessed in most LG activities in Nigeria.

**Lack of Sound Strategic Planning:** Most LG chairmen came into office with the ulterior motive of obtaining what they could obtain from the public coffer. They are therefore at most times devoid of good plans and ideas with which to better the lives of their citizens.

**Lack of Collaboration between the LGs/Research Institutes:** LGs do not involve researchers and their research findings in programme formulation. They also do not seek the help of specialists for advice or instruction on developmental and sundry issues.

**Lack of Clarity of Assignments:** This leaves room for duplication of efforts across the three tiers of governments. The creation of several parallel institutions carrying out similar functions across different levels of government has led to severe fragmentation of the policy executing and delivery system.

**Weak Local Government Capacity:** LG authorities are responsible for rural water supplies and sanitation facilities in their areas. However, only a few actually have the resources and the skills to address these problems. Most LG councils do not have rural water divisions that are able to construct small impoundments of surface water. In several instances, uncollected domestic refuse fills already inadequate surface water drainage systems and flooding occurs.

## 9. Conclusion

Nigeria is blessed with natural as well as human resources that have not been properly channeled to ensure equitable distribution of wealth derived there-from to crystallise into the overall development of the country as a whole. It has been shown that the country cannot develop due to failure of successive governments' inability to succeed in the rural development efforts. This inadequate mobilization of the natural and human resources can be eliminated with political will, commitment and continuity rather than unpredictability of rural development programmes and agencies.

Evidently, it is perhaps the frustration with the various strategies of development that prompted some scholars of development administration, like Balogun (1980) to call for a new development strategy which will focus attention on the moral or ethical aspect of the man in the development efforts, rather than on material acquisition because of the importance of the moral factor of man in ensuring the success of the formulation as well as the implementation of any rural development efforts. Government ought to avoid excessive bureaucratization, politicization and personalization of the rural development agencies as these have been factors responsible for the low performance of development efforts of government in the country from independence to date.

## 10. Recommendations

In the light of the lessons, experiences and problems learned / gained and identified in this study, the following recommendations have been made:

- Effective coordination can be put in place, if Nigerians reduce their tendency to build and defend territories around themselves. Heads of rural development projects/programmes should be ready to cooperate and work with others whose activities are complementary with theirs for the good of the society.
- An important ingredient for success of any programme or activity is total commitment of all concerned to the objectives of the programme or activity. This again is very much lacking in Nigeria. Every regime wants to embark on something new because it wants to be identified with a new programme, and in the process we end up going many steps backward, thereby killing the initial programme of the past government by abandoning it.
- There is a need for project sponsor and managers to evolve methods of involving the local people who are the intended beneficiaries right from the identification phase through to the time of completion. The people's



contributions in form of ideas, financial and human resources will serve as a motivating factor for them to see to the complete success of the programme. The factor is that the local people know and understand their environment and conditions better than the policy formulators and decision makers who operate from outside. It should also be noted that an aspect of participation that is most lacking is the monitoring and evaluation of programme by the beneficiaries themselves.

- Efforts should equally be directed at mobilizing the people to organize themselves into viable groups such as cooperatives, community development association and social clubs which can be used as vehicles for the development of the rural areas.
- There is need for a shift from the wholesale importation of foreign technologies and models that have not proved effectively beneficial to the needs of the rural populace to action research, and the development of indigenous technological base through experimentation and adaptation.
- There is need for total commitment on the part of the government based on political will as well as from the people. It is all too trite to state that the primary catalytic force in rural development is a sustained commitment on the part of the state to develop the rural sector. Commitment based on political will, would ameliorate the persistent failure of rural development efforts in Nigerian. This will ensure adequate funding of projects, the elimination of changing policy midstream, adequate planning, moral support for projects and keeping to policy guidelines as well as accountability.
- Finally, integrated rural development strategy should be employed by all tiers of government and other rural development agencies and / or stakeholder for effective realization of sustainable development in Nigeria.

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