



The Operation and Maintenance Of Rural Infrastructure For Development In Nigeria- The Policy Options

Nwande, Matthias Chukwuma, PhD & Glory C. Olorunfemi

**Department of Public Administration & Local Government,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria
Email: matthias.nwande@unn.edu.ng**

**Centre for Entrepreneurship and Development Research and Department of Public
Administration and Local Government
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria**

ABSTRACT

Rural development in the world generally and in the Third World in particular has assumed the front-burner status since early eighties. Indeed, it remains incontrovertible that unless rural development is given the seriousness it deserves, in terms of closing the gap between theory and practice, the goals of achieving accelerated national development will remain elusive in the developing States. Also, Infrastructure development has in recent times assumed a central importance in Nigeria's quest for social and economic development. Dearth of infrastructure and the unavailability of adequate fund for its development are major challenges to governments. In line with the practices in other developing countries, Nigerian governments at all levels now call on private investors to come to their aid in the form of partnership for the provision of infrastructure. In order to fully reap the benefits of PPP, there are some pre-requisites or critical factors which must be present. This article, using a desk top approach examined these critical operations and critically analyzed the constraints the rural populace are facing. These challenges were discussed and suggestions towards minimizing these challenges were addressed. The paper concluded by positing that—given the contributions of the rural sector to the national economy, enhancing the development of the sector should be central to government and public administration policies.

Keywords: Infrastructure Challenges, Rural development, Infrastructure Development in Nigeria and Policy options.

INTRODUCTION

The rural areas of Nigeria are inhabited by the bulk of the nation's population; they serve as the base for the production of food and fiber. They are also the major sources of capital formation for the country, and a principal market for domestic manufactures (Olatunbosun, 1975). In general terms, the rural areas engage in primary activities that form the foundation for any economic development. Yet, despite the importance attached to the rural areas, they are not attractive to live in. There is absence of the infrastructure which improves the quality of life. Usually, there is absence of potable water, electricity and good feeder roads. The rural people have low purchasing power and standard of living (Akinola, 1991).

In this respect, Ezeah (2005:3) specifically observed 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 is far worse and many communities lack basic amenities like good roads, markets, electricity, pipe-borne water etc.

In the same vein, Abonyi and Nnamani (2011: 255) noted that:

Today, rural poverty persists in Nigeria despite the prosperity created by the country's oil 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.

Indeed, Abah (2010) observed that the most evident display of Nigeria under development condition is the rural areas and that the deplorable condition of the Nigerian rural sector is emphatic. Very curious and worrisome still is that even the few policies and programs initiated and implemented by government over the years have not resulted in meaningful enhancement of the development state of the rural areas in Nigeria (Ezeah, 2005). These efforts had among others, included the institutionalization of the local government to serve as an agent for enhancing rural development, the establishment of the Directorate of Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) to enhance infrastructure 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, the establishment of National Directorate of Employment (NDE), the establishment of Millennium Development Project through Rural Infrastructure, the establishment of Rural Banking Programme, Community Banking (defunct) and Micro Finance Banking to enhance the availability of financial services to the poor, low income earners and the rural dwellers (Ajadi,2010).

Water supply in the Nigerian rural areas has also been discovered to be grossly inadequate and with the spread of water borne disease increased by the accompanying poor sanitary conditions (Ele, 2006). Abah (2010) observes too that rural areas in Nigeria is also characterized by depressingly meager annual per capital income, poor livable houses and various forms of social and political isolation. In summary, there is apparent lack of development in the rural areas of Nigeria as reflected in the near total lack of basic infrastructure, and social services. In Enugu state of Nigeria, for instance, a survey of the development needs of the 471 communities in the state as at 2009 revealed that 385, 342, and 304 rural communities lack access to accessible road, portable water/borehole and cottage hospitals respectively (Enugu state, 2009 cited in Ugwuanyi & Chukwuemeka, 2013).

Attempts at solving the rural problems had been the concern of the governments over the years, e.g. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN); the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) and the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). The contention of the policy makers is that rural infrastructure, if adequately provided, can enhance the quality of rural life. However, it is assumed that the rural people have benefited very little from most rural development programmes.

Conceptualizing Infrastructures

Infrastructure development is one of the bases of assessing the achievements of various countries in the world. The Infrastructural report of Nigeria just most third world countries is nothing to write home about. The housing situation is in a sorry state both quantitatively and qualitatively (Agbola, 1998; Ajanlekoko, 2001; Nubi, 2000; Onibokun, 1996; Oyedele, 2006). Most infrastructures are now decayed and need repair, rehabilitation or replacement.

According to Diri (2013) infrastructure development in democratic governance is more challenging because of the accessibility of people to government and it involves identifying the right project, carrying out feasibility and viability studies and embarking on physical development of the project. The challenges

are numerous and include finance, technology for development, maintenance and design. The challenges also include quality requirements of projects to meet international standard and to be sustainably developed.

He emphasized that Nigeria's lack of basic infrastructure to facilitate sustainable development and trade – both regionally and globally – and to ensure competitiveness is already known by all. In particular, for the large number of local governments, especially the rural ones, the dwellers produce have no access to markets and are not served, hampered by weak transport and energy infrastructure.

In a report titled, *Governance for the Millennium Development Goals: Core Issues and Good Practices*, the 7th United Nations Global Forum on Reinventing Government, Building Trust in Government held in Vienna, Austria from 26-29 June 2007 it is stated that delivery of basic services in developing countries is fraught with a number of challenges. First, not everyone can access public services, simply because of limited coverage. Education, health and water supply facilities may be located far away, making access very difficult if not impossible. This is particularly the case in rural areas. Also, women, in particular, suffer more because of lack of proximate services as they are the primary caregivers for the family and organizers of their households. Second, even if facilities are accessible, the quality of service may be so poor as to be practically non-existent – schools without teachers and supplies, health facilities without doctors/paramedics and medicines and water taps without water constitute familiar examples in most developing countries. Third, there may be barriers to access services for some in society. These may be financial (inability of the poor to afford to pay for services), legal (poor peoples' lack of required legal documentation, e.g. birth certificate, residency certificate, work permit etc.), and socio-cultural (traditions inhibiting participation of women, migrants or people from a low caste).

In response to these issues, governments need to rethink service provision. In a more specific manner, the report pointed thus:

One possible roadway is to broaden the range of service providers by including the “nongovernmental sector,” for example CSOs and the private sector, in service provision. Another is to decentralize service provision to lower tiers of government, thereby bringing both government and the provision of services closer to the people (United Nations, 2007: 26).

Meanwhile, Ikpi (1997) further observed that the state of infrastructure of any state is directly related with the quality of life. “According to recent statistics, the quality of life for most people in Africa appears to have either not improved or only done so marginally. This situation arose from the misrule of early leaders most of whom spearheaded the struggle for independence” (Eregha, 2007). The horrible state of affairs in Africa led to untold devastation of economies in the continent; people had to live below the poverty line with food insecurity, no shelter to accommodate them and no medical or educational facilities to give them some hope for the future. In each case, the oppressive conditions in which they lived with no basic infrastructure led these people to evolve gradually into a class of disgruntled citizens desperate for change. In almost all cases, the military provided the answer by way of coup d'état that toppled these political classes. Usually, such military governments professed to have come in as corrective regimes that would stay for only brief periods within which they would right wrong things before handing over to democratic governments. These military governments often ended up entrenching themselves in power. In fact, most of them exhibited all the traits of the much vilified early leaders and even more (Ikpi, 1997).

The overriding importance of infrastructure in economic growth and human development was equally on point when African Development Bank (ADB) made infrastructure development a cornerstone in its development agenda with regional member countries (TMSA, 2012). The Bank recognizes that lack of adequate social and economic infrastructure is one of the key constraints to short- and medium term poverty reduction in Africa, and has thus been a major force in private and public sector infrastructure

development through the provision of financial and technical resources. At the same time, the Bank recognises the increasing importance of governance for infrastructure development and has made good governance an imperative in its lending and non-lending operations.

There have been considerable changes in the delivery of national infrastructure services across Africa. While Nigeria has improved its telecommunication infrastructural situation, it has not improved in other areas like health, education, airport infrastructures, electricity, housing and transportation. Infrastructure is the medium of production of goods and services and forms the national asset of any nation.

According to Kathmandu Final Workshop Report (2009), infrastructure can help solve our problems: social; health and environment; development; and, economics. A region's infrastructure network, broadly speaking, is the very socio-economic climate created by the institutions that serve as conduits of trade and investment. Some of these institutions are public, others private. In either case, their roles in the context of integration are transformative, helping to change resources into outputs or to enhance trade by removing barriers. Therefore, an improvement in regional infrastructure is one of the key factors affecting the long-term economic growth of a region. The linkages between infrastructure and economic growth are multiple and complex. Not only does infrastructure affect production and consumption directly, it also creates many direct and indirect externalities. It also involves large flows of expenditure, thereby creating additional employment.

A look at the National Development plans of Nigeria from 1975-1985 and other rural development programmes like Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, River Basin Development Authorities and Agricultural Development Projects emphasized shows there is an unfortunate gap between policy formulation and implementation as the need to tackle the problem of rural underdevelopment among the populace still persists (Enyi, 2014).

Okafor (2003) 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 so 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.

Infrastructural facilities refer to those basic services without which primary, secondary and tertiary productive activities cannot function. In its wider sense, infrastructural facilities embrace all public services from law and order through education and public health to transportation, communications and water supply (Mabogunje, 1974 and Kahn, 1979). In other words, infrastructural facilities are elements in the package of basic needs, which a community would like to procure for better living. Kahn (1979) asserts that rural infrastructural facilities can be classified into three main types; namely, **physical infrastructure** – such as roads, water, rural electrification, storage and processing facilities; **social infrastructure** – namely, health and educational facilities, community centres, fire and security services; **institutional infrastructure** which include credit and financial institutions, agricultural research facilities and social infrastructure. It is perceived that the adequate provision of these types of infrastructure will enhance the introduction and adoption of innovations offered by institutional infrastructure.

Nigeria's rural areas are home to the greater proportion of the population. Infrastructural provision in these rural areas is poor especially in respect of road, educational and medical infrastructure. But the rural dwellers are less vocal; therefore, they are more or less neglected. The rural area is characterised by a culture of poverty, as most people still live barely above subsistence level. The paper therefore attempts to inter-alia examine the continuing technocratic reformist behaviour of the Nigerian State in rural development by analyzing factors hindering the provision and sustenance of rural infrastructural facilities.

It also evaluates the role of the state on issues relating to rural development policy formulation and execution, finance and maintenance. However, a review of the nature and structure of the Nigerian economy will attempt to buttress the persistent urban bias in the provision of bias infrastructures. It is suggested, among other things that since the provision and sustenance of rural infrastructural facilities are crucial in realizing the objectives of rural development, the army of rural migrants must be practically involved, in an integrated approach manner, within the planning, operation and management system. In addition, the facilities to be provided must be relevant to the needs or peculiarities of the environment. Hence, the conventional approach to rural development and debilitating facilities must be transcended to cover a wider spectrum of activities within and between rural and urban communities with the sole objective of raising living standards.

Infrastructural Development and the Rural Areas

The role of infrastructural facilities in grassroots development and poverty reduction cannot be over-emphasised whether in urban or rural environments. McNeil (1993) shows that adequate infrastructure reduces the costs of production, which affects profitability, levels of output, and employment. When infrastructure work productivity and labour increase. When it does not work, citizens suffer, particularly the poor. Thus, economic renewal and societal welfare become postponed or halted.

Rural areas in Nigeria are generally deprived of the basic needs of life such as clothing, housing, medical care, postal communication, education, transport facilities, recreation, neighbourhood amenities, credit facilities and horizon for self-improvement. Studies in Nigeria show a high degree of inequality in income distribution (Modupe, 1986; World Bank, 2007) and in the provision of socio-economic opportunities and facilities between rural and urban areas (Mabogunje, 1977 and Stewart 1985) in which the rural area is less favoured. According to the World Bank (2007), the average per capita expenditure of a poor rural household in Nigeria was one-fifth of the non-poor in 2002. Of the extremely poor, 85 percent lived in rural areas and more than two-thirds of them lived on farms. The infrastructural delivery arrangements at the local level point to the fact that the quality and quantum of infrastructural facilities are far from satisfactory.

One of the factors that explain the appalling conditions of rural infrastructure in Nigeria is the type of administrative and governance arrangements that the post-colonial independence leaders adopted. The arrangements were too centralized. It separated the state structure of governance from the people-oriented institutions. Thus, there was (is) a wide gap between state and society, as different cultural values prevail within the bureaucracy as against the rest of society. Invariably, the public officials became polynormative, and in many cases this translated into normlessness (Riggs, 1962). For instance, after independence, the Nigerian government, confident of the powers and potentials of central government departments to promote and mobilise development, eliminated all opposition to their administration and abolished the three-tier system of local government that had some connections with the indigenous institutions. Thus, the indigenous system of governance that had robust attributes of people-centred democracy was denigrated. Consequently, government attentions were directed at the few urban centres in terms of infrastructures and government edifices, while rural areas were neglected. It has been reported that the majority (90.0%) of the rural dwellers embarked on journey on untarred rural roads and 84.0% of them travelled on bad roads, which consumed more time than necessary. Since time is money, rural roads impoverished the rural dwellers in Nigeria (Akinola, 2003).

The official inadequacy in the provision of basic facilities in rural areas of developing countries is not limited to Nigeria alone. Other countries of the world, especially, developing countries (in Latin America, Asia, and Africa) such as Bolivia, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Malawi, Ghana, and Sri Lanka, to mention a few, have their own experiences of rural 'neglect'. A notable experience in these countries is the adoption of self-help techniques by the affected local people at providing the basic facilities in their respective communities. The official inadequacy in the rural sector in Nigeria led the rural populace to revive their old traditions and lay emphasis on collective action and shared strategies to solve problems of

infrastructural deprivation. Research findings in Nigeria confirm the achievements of community-based institutions in the delivery of essential goods and services (Olowu *et al*, 1991; Akinola, 1991 and Adedeji and Onigu, 1997).

The incessant and scuttling trend of mass rural migration to urban centers is imbued with attendant socio-economic and political implications. To a large extent, the high rates of rural-urban migration are therefore a direct result of deliberate state neglect of rural dwellers' socio economic conditions. Problems of population influxes are often accompanied by overcrowding and housing shortages as well as the growth of shanty and squalor settlements at the fringes of urban areas have become issues of great concern. All these are adduced to have constituted fundamental by products of abysmal provision, operation and maintenance of basic infrastructural need in the countryside. This scenario is indeed endemic in all over the under –developed countries.

These problems have therefore increase additional pressures on urban social services such as healthcare system, water supply, waste disposal, transportation and educational institutions. Thus, the growing number of lumpen-proletarians has exacerbated the unemployment rate and dwindled the potentialities of agricultural producers in both urban and rural areas respectively. This inevitably leads to swelling crime rate, political tension, violence and continuing instability (Adedeji and Onigu, 1997).

Our point of departure is that, apart from the poverty problem, the prime factor for rural-urban exodus is the attractions of the infrastructural facilities placed in the latter; and this trend would continue unabated until such facilities are relatively or equitably provided and sustained in the former. Hence, the sustainability of rural development; particularly the provision, operation and maintenance of appropriate rural infrastructures has, over time, eluded the hopes and aspirations created in the minds of the rural folks. But in spite of the efforts to formulate rural development policies by various regimes, their implementations have not yet transcended beyond their written forms or proclamations.

Rural Infrastructures and Rural Development

Infrastructure facilities consist of three major categories or classes. These categories of infrastructures are physical, social and institutional. The physical infrastructures are composed of transformation facilities consisting of roads, bridges and railways stage facilities made up of warehouse and silos; irrigation and water resources development facilities composed of dams, irrigation, water facilities, drainage etc., siloed conservation facilities and other forms of processing facilities.

The social infrastructures are also divided into different segment, which include health and medical facilities. These consist of hospitals, dispensaries, maternity and health centers. Educational components of infra-structural facilities constitute of primary, secondary and technical schools, vocational and adult educational facilities while rural utilities consist of a wide range of welfare facilities such as water supply, electricity etc.

The components of institutional infrastructures include cooperative societies, farmers' unions , community development programmes/projects through self help efforts, financial institutions like banks, post offices, agricultural research facilities made up of research sub stations, experimental farms, demonstration plants, agricultural extension and training services, marketing crop and animal protection services; post and telecommunication facilities.

It should be noted that the improvement of the status of rural residents is greatly influenced by the type, quality and quantity of infrastructures placed there and with regular maintenance. For example, sources of drinking water, condition of personal hygiene, nature of environmental sanitation, nutritional status, literacy levels and the overall socio-economic condition of the community must be the focus of attention and therefore sustained for a viable rural development.

Thus the reasons why many rural development policies and strategies have failed to achieve their stated objective are largely due to the non recognition and non provision as well as non maintenance of the necessary or appropriate infrastructural facilities that need to be put in place overtime and space (Adedeji and Onigu, 1997). Without the appropriate provision, operation and maintenance of basic infrastructures

therefore, no rural development policy or strategy can stand the test of time. Rural infrastructures are therefore the fundamental ingredients capable of preventing or at least reducing the phenomenal rural urban drift, which is always accompanied with swelling socio economic and political problems.

Distribution of Rural Infrastructures

Rural infrastructures are sine-qua non for any rural development programme to succeed. The distribution, operation and maintenance are other fundamental prerequisites for a successful rural development. Therefore rural infrastructures constitute the necessary components or ingredients for motivating rural residents to be more productive and achieve relative self-reliance and in turn contribute to national development (Modupe, 1986). They also aid and enhance the realization of improved rural life. It is quite noticeable that the distribution of rural infrastructures, over time, has not been equitable and spectacular. The gross disparities and total lack of infrastructures in the rural Nigeria are not therefore unusual features.

This situation in Nigeria is paradoxical and diabolical. Paradoxically, within the midst of abundant resources, poverty reigns high and is on the increase with widening gulf of inequality accompanied by drastic falling standard of living. Consequently, a great number of young, agile and productive rural dwellers, used in an attenuated form, have been transformed and reduced to lumpen proletarians with diabolical undertones. Rural dwellers and migrants to urban areas have borne the brunt of these sufferings inappropriately and are constantly being denied social welfare and other essential infrastructures of all categories.

It must be emphasized that rural communities have remained poor and continued to suffer from inadequate standard of living. Thus, the poverty and deteriorating conditions in the countryside are entirely attributed to the neglect and lack on the part of the government. The popular assumption stressed that for a reversal of a self-sustaining rural development, the policies and strategies must be matched with sufficient capital investment. But despite such capital investments the situation is not ameliorated (Adedeji and Onigu, 1997).

The Economy and Rural Development Policy Options

The main stay of Nigerian economy is agriculture. Invariably, the predominant activity of rural Nigerians is farming thus constituting the main pedestal of the economy. Agriculture is consequently the major source of income and sustenance of Nigerians in the rural areas notwithstanding the severe strains and stresses the sector has been subjected. The under-developed rural economic productive process has not been transformed. Rural people use simple implements to produce food and cash crops for their smallholding and are therefore the major participants in their own development in their own environment. Other complementary activities that vibrate rural dynamism and diversification and indeed the entire economy range from trading or commercial transaction to small scale industrial enterprises in forms of weaving, food processing, carpentry, carving, pottery etc.

In theory, rural development programme is an approach designed to raise or even change social and economic conditions of rural dwellers. The targeted group is primarily the rural poor who live in abject or absolute poverty. Hence, the basic objectives of rural development strategy are to improve economic and social conditions of rural communities, in an integrated approach, with a view to eradicating poverty (Olatunbosun, 1975). That is why economic policy in the 1970s was generally described as more beneficial to the urban few with intrinsic and swelling economic frustration of large rural masses.

Since rural development programmes cannot be attained through agricultural sector alone, it should be stressed that agriculture is prime in transforming rural areas in symbiotic relations or integrated patterns with other sectors. Therefore, a composite of all embracing programmes for rural development should be integrated towards combating rural poverty.

Policy options for rural development range from one extreme to another with some middle road approach strategies. Keith Griffin has categorized them into technocratic, reformist and radical. The objectives of

technocratic strategy are to increase agricultural output by encouraging framers, make use of imported technology based on the free market forces, steep competitions and dispersed private holdings.

The reformist strategy is characterized by inconsistencies as a result of its eclectic vacillating of policies. The aim of the policy is to redistribute resources to some sections of the community. "Quite often, the reforms are partial, fragmented and incomplete and concentrated in certain regions to the exclusion of others, with the consequence that this style creates a dualistic or bimodal agricultural sector". Thus the beneficiaries include land owning elite, progressive farmers of urban origins like the army and other Paramilitary officers, civil servants, politicians and traditional nobility.

Rural communities provide palpable contrasts, among many other things with urban settlement in the provision maintenance of infrastructural facilities. As the majority of over 100 million Nigerians are residents of rural areas, the rural-urban distribution of infra-structural facilities still exhibits greater imbalance against the predominantly populated rural areas. Thus urban policies and preferences under the pretext of rural development, have continued to flood 'the market days' of budget speeches and other occasions of all levels of government on a continuous basis where slogans like "rural transformation" 'improvement and enhancement of quality of life' 'combating and eradication of poverty' 'a just and egalitarian society' etc. have incessantly become the predominant shibboleths (Adedeji and Onigu, 1997). The phenomenal study of rural setting must intrinsically be linked with the urban social conditions since the former exists in a symbiotic pattern with latter. In other words, the dialectics of rural-urban relationships show that the growth of urban areas and the well-being of the inhabitants automatically dwarf rural setting and dwellers in all ramifications; as problems and deplorable conditions of rural communities are intrinsically or dielectrically associate with urbanization or vice versa.

Many studies tend to justify the lack of provisions of amenities to the majority of people on the perennial socio-economic predicaments of many states emanating from the current international economic order. This tempting international perspective is misleading as the fallacious world economic recessions should not be excused for the persistent or continuing injustice to rural areas in the abysmal provision of facilities despite the enormous growth the economy had attained. To break the linkage of international economic conditions, seemingly regarded to impede an assault on rural poverty, heavy emphasis must be appropriately placed to improve condition of life based on the abundant human and materials resources (Adedeji and Onigu, 1997).

It is important to realize that the paradoxes of the adopted policies and strategies for rural development in Nigeria have only succeeded in hurting rather than pleasing millions of rural communities by officially promoting more social inequality and injustice. To further impinge on the international economic perspective on the provision and sustenance of basic infrastructures in the rural areas, Sandbrook succinctly states that:

...the poor may more intensely feel their poverty in the urban than the rural milieu. Absolute poverty appears harder for its victims to bear when they are placed, as in cities, to draw invidious comparisons with lifestyles of the consciously well to do (Sandbrook, 1982).

Since agricultural activities constitute the primary, if not the only, rural occupation and source of income, welfare efforts for the rural communities must go beyond the conventional raising of per capital income through the World Bank sponsored Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), to the reasonable or adequate provision and maintenance of infrastructural needs. Like their urban counterparts, rural dwellers must be provided with all forms of improved and enhanced health and medical needs, good drinking water, good network of passable roads, electricity, schools etc.

However, the traditional approach of rural development, through agriculture, must be shifted from recognizing rural communities as mere food producers where only necessary or selected agriculture implements, inputs or infrastructures are supposed to be provided. Hence, rural folks must be recognized to be equally or equitably entitled to vital things of good life. Sandbrook further shows that:

...any policies that arguments urban bias is likely to compound the poverty problem. Relevant here is the paradox that efforts to expand urban employment...with stagnant rural areas will increase urban unemployment and under-development, a consequence of stimulating greater migration to the relatively prosperous cities (Sandbrook, 1982).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rural infrastructures are multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral. In this regard, to attain a high and consistent effort of effectively eliminating factors responsible for perpetual rural poverty and living conditions, all factors of interrelated rural conditions must be taken into their holistic perspectives with an attempt to 'spread-out' resources thinly or thickly into the countryside.

But since agriculture constitutes the main stay of rural life, agricultural infrastructures must form the basic and of the only condition for rural development. It is pertinent to realize that the proportion between 70-80% of Nigerians the total population lives in the rural areas notwithstanding the rate of rural depletion which has been incessant over time and largely due to lack of infrastructures. The efforts to stem the tide of scuttling rural migration have not been plausible especially in;

- (a) improving rural income levels and employment opportunities
- (b) providing necessary infrastructural facilities and community services, and
- (c) initiated actions geared towards responsible use of rural resources to preserve the environment and improve the quality of rural life.

It should be noted that the Nigeria's failure to achieve a minimum level of income above the 'poverty level' for its citizens has its other corresponding failures in providing minimum health, education etc among others to the rural communities (World Bank, 2007). According to the World Bank, the failure in providing basic needs or infrastructures has kept 40% of the people in the Third World countries in "the condition of 'absolute poverty'- a condition of life so degraded by diseases, illiteracy, malnutrition and squalor as to deny its victims basic human necessities.

Disparities in the distribution of infrastructure between rural and urban areas are palpable. For instance, the distribution of public utilities such as water supplies has been problematic even in urban areas let alone rural. The type and source of water supply in the rural area are deplorable and pathetic (Olatubosun, 1975).

Since good water sustains life, its adequacy and sources are crucial for any community especially in the realization of viable rural development strategy. It is well know that the main sources of water supply for the rural people are the rivers, ponds, streams, shallow wells and the likes, which are highly vulnerable to all sorts of epidemics. Only in very few rural areas are concrete wells found. Pipe borne and boreholes are a rarity in rural communities. It should be noted that poor water supply is more acute than the provision of schools, health centers or hospitals in rural areas.

It should be recalled that the federal government launched the National borehole programme in 1981 with the objective of providing portable water to most rural people in the country. Ironically, the rural populace was not involved in the programme. The entire effort was inadvertently transformed as an exercise in futility. For instance, the operation and maintenance of water pumping machines, fuel etc. where they were provided, could not continue to be sustained. Hence, the noninvolvement of the people in the communities led to the collapse of the entire programme. Politics however, contributed part of its initial failures.

Scarcity and total absence of commercial forms of energy-electricity in the rural areas have also constituted other dimensions of the problems of public utilities confronting rural communities rural energy problems must therefore be tackled so as to boost industrialization, employment and indeed equity. A fundamental success in these efforts would curtail, in great degrees, the phenomenal rural-urban drain.

In Rural areas where primary (or even secondary) schools exist and are attended by pupils, the conditions

of the schools are highly deplorable, congested and without materials to teach and learn. The condition of teachers is in fact worse than the condition of the materials to work with. This is because materials could be obtained, the structure of the schools could be improved or renovated overnight but to resuscitate the condition and change the psych of the teacher would be a Herculean task. However, the teacher-pupil ratio is so large that teaching and learning are constrained if not impossible.

In some places, it is not uncommon to assemble the children under tree shades and pretend to teach and learn. Even in urban areas, bare floored, and over blown roof classes are noticeable with some classes held in traditional "Zauruka" (Ega et'al, 1987). It should be recognized that education is prime in people's well being. For instance health care delivery system for any community cannot be attained without a corresponding educational attainment. Hence, primary knowledge on health education, clean water, mother and childcare, immunization, prevention and control of infectious diseases etc are very vital (Mabogunje, 1977).

Within the purview of rural infrastructures for a sustainable rural development strategy, rural health care system should be seen as constituting a part of the entire processes development. The symbiosis of health, water supply, education, transport, environment, agriculture productivity, rural credit schemes, and electricity as well as the involvement of the people are so integrated that the absence of any one of them would have a serious repercussion on rural development strategy. The popular adage of health is wealth – a healthy society is a wealthy one is very relevant. Invariably, mere absence from disease, pain or infirmity does not suggest a healthy society; people must be free from physical, mental and social disability also.

Hence, for a proper health care system recreation is an important infrastructure that affects health status of individuals. Recreational facilities such as parks, sports centers, T.V. viewing centers among others as well as adequate provision of health centers, drugs and dressings etc. are virtually absent in most of our rural areas and indeed very limited supply in even the urban areas. Hence the indices of distributing of health facilities and materials in their lopsided nature have, despite the scenario expressed in government documents and public speeches, only continued to worsen while structures dilapidate.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to argue that the operation and maintenance of rural infrastructure, within the entire rural development policy in Nigeria are faulted due to the technocratic reformist strategy of the state. Confronted with disparities in the provision of infrastructural facilities or utilities, the poverty-stricken rural masses have continued to migrate en mass to urban center; thus turning the policy into a colossal exercise in futility.

Hence the key to success to curtail mass exodus and its accompanying consequences in the society, efforts should be geared for a pragmatic approach where all levels of the community are actively and psychologically involved to participate in every aspect of development schemes like planning, financing and maintenance.

Furthermore, the conventional and erratic approach to rural development in Nigeria through the politics of provision of agricultural infrastructures should be shifted by recognizing the rural dwellers as equally and properly entitled to all components of social, institutional and physical infrastructures so as to stamp out the provocations and temptations of rural drain. The continuing trend of encroaching peasant land by the big armchair farmers should also be halted.

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