Rural Transformation and National Development

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Abstract: Tackling rural underdevelopment remain a central debates in development issues and the challenges are enormous, the transformation of the rural area is a key issue in the overall development of a nation. The constraints to developing the rural areas and its conditions have continued to worsen with poverty as the major issue in the rural areas in spite of their potentials, this leading to a drift to the urban area with its attendance challenges of high cost of living, the security and social implication of a larger body of urban unemployment. Therefore, a major concern to governments, multilateral institutions and policy makers in different countries is to identify appropriate strategy for poverty alleviation especially in the rural areas. This work favours the adoption of the bottom-up/down-up development paradigm to achieve sustainable development. Thereby advocating for a legislation to hurt the abortion of strategy unexhausted.

Key Words: National development, rural transformation, urban drift, poverty, underdevelopment.

I. Introduction

Nigeria is richly and hugely endowed both in human and natural resources, in spite of this the people are still heavily impoverished, and despite the country’s vast oil wealth and abundant human resources, development challenges remain daunting, how then, do we explain this scenario of suffering in the midst of plenty. This became a mystery and therefore calls for an intellectual discussion via an intellectual reasoning in other to change the tide of things. The import of this work is to identify causes of rural staticness and retrogression that has become a major drag in national development, and to lay a foundation to corroborate previous work on the way forward. Conscious steps taking can actually bring about a drastic change for the better.

The subject matters of development and underdevelopment in Nigeria or transformations calls for myriads of questions ranging from what is rural transformation, what is national development? What method could bring about national development? Has there been any adopted before now? If they failed why and how future occurrence could be addressed, are the failures from the policies or the implementation? Does the handler have requisite knowledge and skill?

Rural transformation is viewed as a panacea, route or mechanism to national development and that national development will be a near impossibility if the rural area is not adequately attended to. Rural transformation is perceived as a total overhauling of the rural system from the monopoly of an agrarian outlook to an all-inclusive life Programme of service generating and manufacturing engendered outlook.

Rural transformation connotes rapid and radical rural restructuring such as changes in agricultural intensity, crop selection patterns, farmland, land productivity and farm income, labour and technological productivity and major improvements in rural housing and economic and social conditions resulting from industrialization (Long et. al., 2011 cited in Ngah, 2012[1]). To this paper it suggest an overhauling of the constraint to rural development system and putting in place measures for continuous advancement and breakthrough. This paper viewed rural impoverishment and its implication for the overall wellbeing of the nation as a result of rural neglect, the paper therefore advocate for developing and concentrating a larger percentage of the welfare package to the rural societies knowing fully well that a greater percentage of the total populations are found in the rural region of Nigeria (Issa, Omopupa and Salman, 2011[2]; Metiboba, 2012[3]) and this teeming population are jetting out into the urban area thereby causing overcrowding and causing unnecessary pressure on the facilities in the urban center, creating an enabling environment in the rural area will go a long way to ease the burden in the cities, because life will be more convenient and bearable in the rural areas.

II. Conceptual Framework

Development: Development is complex and multi-dimensional; it entails process in the social, economic, cultural and other facets of life. Throughout human history, men have sought to increase their ability to conquer the environment with a view to improving their standard of living. The process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of people is generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society could be termed development. It is reasonable to
know that development is not only an economic exercise, but also involves both socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life. Development entails qualitative and quantitative increase in the capacity, skills, creativity and general material well-being of individuals (Bellu, 2011; Long et al, 2012) cited in Ngah, 2012). The problem of development in Nigeria does not resume from lack of competent personnel or the absence of adequate financial resources, rather it is more associated with dishonesty and the quest for personal gain on the part of the policy makers and the implementers of the Programme. The key issues that development tends to address are referred to as the indicators of development; they are inequality, unemployment, and poverty. Development is the transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. It is also referred to as the uniform distribution of resources, the integration of the people into national economy; it is a socio-economic process which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society.

According to Ohagwu (2010,6) development is not the same thing as change, growth or modernization, but the nature, content and course of a society, it is the choice about goals for achieving the realization of human potential. Gboyega (2003,7) described development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today’s consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Naomi (1995,8) believes that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life. Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013,9) assert that development could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved.

Development is not just a matter of getting more money into the hands of the poor, but ensuring that increased production, and its resulting increased income, leads to an improved standard of living (Olawoye, 2002,10). Every meaningful, concrete and lasting development begins and ends in the focus on human resources, this equally connotes capacity expansion (Omotola, 2006,11) it requires adequate empowerment of the state and society such that they can adequately distil their complimentary responsibilities, and it requires an enhanced state capacity as well as institutional and governmental stability. According to Bello (2011,12) development usually means improvement; it is an event constituting a new change in a changing situation, it is qualified as follows, economic development, human development, sustainable development, tertiary development etc. to him economic development suggest an increase in the per capital income of the economic system bringing about an economic growth, while human development indicates long and healthy life, knowledge and a descent standard of living measured by life expectancy at birth, thereby generating empowerment, self-reliance, and a general improvement in community and social relationships, and sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present as well as the future generation. Tertiary development envisages poles of attractions for human activities as result of the interrelationships between the rural and urban areas.

POVERTY: This is a concept that defies an objective definition because of its multi-dimensional nature, it depicts a condition of insufficient and inadequate resources, it is also an inability to attain a minimum standard of living and also where material means of sustenance within a giving society is hardly enough for subsistence (Osinubi, 2003,13) World Bank Report, 1990,14) This is a life situation characterized by want, frustration, human suffering and disgrace. The debate on the relationship between rural area and national development with special reference to poverty in sub Saharan African has gone through a complete circle (Oyefranti and Olaiwolola, 2005;15 Apata, et al, 2010,16), little wonder why the level of backwardness in the nation in spite of the various endowments natural and human (Omonona, 2010,17),Olowa (2012,18) sees poverty as an outcome of inefficient use of common resources as a result of a weak policy environment, inadequate infrastructure, weak access to technology, credit and also by the use of certain mechanisms to exclude a group from participating in the democratic process and economic development.Poverty to him is defined as persistent or permanent socio-economic deprivations and is linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, endemic socio-political and cultural factors and gender. Poverty could be transient or structural,transient poverty is more reversible but can become structural if it persists.There have been quite a myriad of attempts in the past, targeted at increasing the standard of living, alleviating poverty and providing infrastructural amenities to the rural populace of our nation. A number of these efforts, such as the “One Local Government, One Product” initiative, the rural integrated project; operation feed the nation, the green revolution, agricultural development project and a host of others are either
rendered ineffective, inappropriate, not matching with the cultural setting of most rural region, in which most have not seen the light of the day.

Despite Nigeria’s plentiful agricultural resources and oil wealth, poverty is widespread in the country and has increased since the late 1990s. Some 70 per cent of Nigerians live on less than US$1.25 a day. According to the World Resources Institute’s environmental resource portal Earth Trends, about 71 percent of Nigerians live on less than $2 a day [http://www.ifad.org/]

Poverty is especially severe in rural areas, where up to 80 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, and social services and infrastructure are limited. The country’s poor rural women and men depend on agriculture for food and income. About 90 per cent of Nigeria’s food is produced by small-scale farmers who cultivate small plots of land and depend on rainfall rather than irrigation systems.

It’s quite evident that most of the strategies for the implementation of past rural development initiatives have some missing critical ingredients that are necessary to successfully mobilize, empower and involve the rural class in actively participating and contributing to national productivity in a sustainable manner. Alleviating poverty as discussed from previous entails creating a condition to becoming a producer as it enhances direct earnings, the provision of essentials services and improvement of basic needs such as medical, housing, education and a regular access to nutritional food. (Osinubi, 2003, [20])

Development Paradigms, Transformation And Sustainable Development

Paradigms are modalities or path to follow to achieve development, based on a codified set of activities or based on a vision regarding the functioning and evolution of a socio-economic system (Bellu, 2011, [21]). Obetta and Okide (2012, [22]). Adell (1999, [23]) identified various development paradigm to include the growth pole theory, big push policy, selective approach, the protectionist, top-down, key settlement strategy, bottom-up approach, decentralized territorial approach, adaptive approach, laissez faire. The approaches to development differs from the above stated strategies, for instance the growth pole theory, top-down, trickle down talk about a centralized, monolithic model of development where economic growth is achieved through the spread of economic growth from urban to rural areas as government of developing countries induce economic growth and welfare by investing heavily in capital intensive industries in large urban centers or regional capitals. This growth is supposed to spread to the rural areas in a process of regional development. This model has been criticized for its failure to meet the need of the rural dweller, the top down model failed because the institutions created to foster development from the top had themselves become the greatest hindrance to development. The trickle down model is inappropriate, irrelevant to the environment and needs of the people, it is always a misdirected and misplaced concept when passing down to the poor certain policies and directives from the governing bureaucracy. In contrast to the top down models central objectives of industrialization and economic growth, the bottom-up model advocates rural development and distributional issues. Instead of the state administered, large scale infrastructure projects that were central to the employment generation strategy of the top-down model, it proposed small-scale, bottom-up projects that directly involved the urban and rural poor in income generating schemes. From the down-up models the community is empowered and mobilized to implement sustainable development projects, this implies that developments starts with the people free from foreign ideology and infections and promote self-reliance and self-consciousness

TRANSFORMATIONS: The word transformation denotes complete change of something such as to it form, appearance and character (Longman Dictionary). In relation to the transformation initiative undertaken by the Nigerian government, the term connotes the rapid and fundamental changes to be pursued by the government to achieve certain goals within the framework of vision 2020 and the transformation agenda. Transformation focuses on changes that are material in nature, in particular the transformation of the economic activities (Coker et al 2012, [24] Ngah, 2012, [25])

According to Bellu (2011, [26]) sustainable development is a development which considers the long term perspectives of the socio-economic system, to ensure that improvements occurring in the short term will not be detrimental to the future status or development potential of the system, that is, development will be sustainable on environmental, social, financial and other grounds.

Sustainable development is the development whether rural or urban that will entail that we should leave to the next generation a stock of quality of life assets no less than those we have inherited—Brundtland Commission and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) (Pearce, Markandya and Barbier, 1989, cited in Olawepo, 2003, [27])

Holmberg and Sandbrook (1992, cited in Olawepo, 2003, [28]) assert that the next generation should inherit man made assets and environmental assets, or that the next generation should inherit a stock of environmental assets no less than that inherited by the previous generation, or that the inherited stock should comprise man-made assets, natural assets and human capital.
Sustainable development means that either that per capital utility or well-being is increasing overtime with free exchange or substitution between natural man made capital or that per capital or well-being is increasing subject to non-declining natural wealth.

Sustainable development permits improvement in the overall welfare and quality of life of the rural people. It is a tradeoff between economic growth and environmental conservation, introducing modern technology yet preserving traditional culture or reconciling growth with improved social equity.

The people –centered sustainable development approach:This states that the ultimate goals of poverty alleviation is ensuring people centered development. The concept means economic growth makes no meaning if the benefits are not equitably distributed, this generates the environment rather than destroying it, it empowers the people and not marginalized, it gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and provides for their participation in decision affecting them.

III. Characteristics Of Rural Society

Rural society has been variously described by varying scholars to mean the following, a settlement whose major occupations are basically agricultural at a subsistence level, the size of the populations are always very low, the infrastructural development is infinitesimally low, there is slow social and labour mobility, social interaction is at an informal level, a low role differentiation (Olawoye, 2002;[29]Ohagwu, 2010;[30]Ndukwe, 2005,[31]).

Rural Factors Necessitating the Transformation of Rural Nigeria

There are a number of factors that inform the essence of attaining transformation or that could bring about the transformation of a rural society, these are the potentials that the rural society housed and they include large space of unoccupied land meant for expansion, invention and creation of opportunities and eventuality and a large deposition of human and natural resources left untapped or whose utilization is not maximally engaged, and the inability to harness rural resources leave the rural areas impoverished.

The fact that the rural society housed a larger proportion of the population demands attention for the transformations of the rural region. Our rural demography is about 75% of the national population and agriculture is the mainstay of this segment, by implication, the rural class and agricultural sector are critical fundamentals of our national economic development. Evidently, agriculture offers key solutions for rural transformation, increased productivity and self-sufficiency, job creation, widespread rural poverty reduction, infrastructural and industrial development, and increased standard of living at the grassroots, the total neglect of this segment of the society by the focus on oil as against agricultural development further enmeshed the nation into greater dangers of underdevelopment.

The Implications of Rural Underdevelopment: A major implication of rural underdevelopment is the rural flight leading to an influx of able body rural population into the urban region thereby resulting into an urban congestion, this is capable of breeding conflict as the resources available is being keenly contested for, this results into urban unemployment, high cost of living, crime – (most rural populations lack the skill to compete in the urban area, again, since the available resources become limited it lead to a condition of the survival of the fittest where everyone device means for survival which may actually contravene the law of the land. The rural area is therefore at a loss of element that could contribute to the overhauling of the structure of underdevelopment in the area.

IV. The Challenges Of Rural Development

This section addresses the constraint to rural development, and the challenges are enormous, the following issues had actually handicapped rural development, corruption, unemployment, poverty, inequality, greed, ignorance, selfish and personal aggrandizement.

First and foremost is the misconception of what development is, according to Ohagwu, (2010,[32]) early development planning in Nigeria were strongly influenced by models of development derived from the experiences of the Western industrialized nations. These models which turned out to be the first set of colonial heritage, stressed capital intensive technology, imported from the developed economies or countries. One other challenge is the implementation of policy for development, for lack of political will to stamped down on corruption, the whole process is either politicized or the absence of expert to implement in order to bring out the desired result.

Ugwuanyi (2010,[33]) identified the following as constraint to human resources development, population growth rate-this include the composition of the population whether high or low dependent over independent population with a female dominated population and slow growth in knowledge. This is stressing the role of human resources in the developmental process.
Previous works stated that rural areas in Nigeria house most of the producers of livestock and crops, but the story had gone worst today, rural areas in Nigeria now lack basic necessities of life and equally jettison farming work, most land being used are no longer fertile.

It should be noted that the previous development programs had their successes and failures, they were not people oriented and again the people were not involved in the planning stages, the life of the programs were short lived as there were no proper follow up either by the planner or appropriate government agencies, furthermore no policies continuity(olawepo 2003).[34]. Various strategies and agencies such as DFFRI, ADP, CDAs, etc. for development failed to perform and have since fizzled out in spite of the fanfare and policy statement that heralded their establishment, the failure has created a number of gaps in rural development in Nigeria (Ohagwu, 2010).[35]. The human conditions of very many rural communities in Nigeria remain deplorable, thus implying that lacunae exist in the rural development efforts, this missing link is as result of lack of coordination or integration between the activities of the development agencies, the absence of balance between urban and rural development which results from the fact that most developments efforts are concentrated in urban centers (Madu,2003 cited in Ohagwu,2010,[36])

The gap between the west and the rest is becoming widen by the day owing to the fact that the developmental effort are always meeting with challenges that defies strategies without commitment for the total execution or implementation of the policies for development. The solution to the challenges of development in Nigeria is not in devising another strategy but in the implementations of good strategy. The situation is the one of an economic growth without a corresponding development, previous works have identified the absence of long-term perspective, lack of continuity, consistency and commitment to stated policies and we ask the question why, greed, ignorance, and poverty not just the absence of cash at hand but poverty of the mind and were increase salary leading to a galloping inflation and because of selfish and personal aggrandizement the succeeding administration has always jettisoned the strategy of the immediate past administration by not improving on the lapses of the past administration to consolidate on national development. Nigeria as a country has witnessed various developmental strategy at the turn of the fourth republic ranging from NEEDS, the seven apses of the past administration to consolidate on national development. Nigeria as a country had witnessed various developmental strategy at the turn of the fourth republic ranging from NEEDS, the seven apses of the past administration to consolidate on national development. Nigeria as a country

V. Conclusion And Recommendations

The obstacle to rural transformation in Nigeria, are poor conditions and a threat to sustainability of both rural resources and rural development. Therefore, the challenge is how to address and at the same time ensure sustainability of development in the rural areas. What is required is the re-evaluation of rural development policies and strategies by the various interest groups and agencies

In all ramifications, development is for the people and therefore must be designed to meet their needs. This means that all rural development efforts must be derived from the felt-needs and aspirations of the rural people and not in response to the needs of the urban political economy such as unemployment, food shortfalls and rural-urban migration. The present rural development situation poses great problems to all and sundry. Government should show the necessary leadership by matching words with action through evolving workable rural development approaches, proper co-ordination, funding and technical assistance. The government must create an enabling environment characterized by political stability and must support fully the participation of the rural poor in programmes that affect their life chances. It is imperative for government to legislate to make it possible for the rural poor to participate. This is because the centralized public administrative system and its functionaries may continue to favour top-down development paradigm. The people oriented programmes should be initiated and the rural people should be involved both in the planning and execution of the Programme. Developing the rural communities will go a long way in reducing socio-economic pressures engendered by rural to urban migration, unemployment and crimes in the bourgeoning urban sectors.

The government should also encourage the drift to the rural areas as they make available the amenities that will make the migrants to stay. The migrant can form themselves into cooperatives societies which can be used to attract the attention of government or NGO’s for cottage industries and the likes

It should also encourage nation’s experts to make useful contributions with their talents. Government has a chief role of building and financing an enduring political, social, cultural and environmental structure on which rural transformation can thrive, through the encouragement and recognition of the roles of cooperatives, NGOs, and private initiatives as their grassroots’ appeals promote sustainable rural development. This means that more opportunities should be given to the rural people for participation in decisions that govern their lives. Therefore, proper human capital development should be developed and maintained so as to eliminate the paternalistic view which assumes that the rural people are passive and fatalistic, uninterested in improvement of their lives, and incapable of making initiatives for improvement.
Finally, there should be a legislation stopping the jettisoning of projects or models of development that has not been exhausted, as observed succeeding government in Nigeria have always pride themselves at inventing models for the execution of their project at the detriment of how realistic, reliable, result oriented a model of past government might appear to be

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