

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND RURAL UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A RETHINK

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### Abstract

The paper is a critical examination of rural development programmes and the challenge of rural underdevelopment in Nigeria. It emphasizes the need for a paradigm shift in the development of rural areas in Nigeria. The “development space” between urban and rural areas in Nigeria is very broad (in terms of the provision of economic development, quality of life, access to opportunities, amenities, social services and standard of living). This leads to what is suitably characterized as the rural- urban dichotomy. The rural areas are usually abhorrently mistreated as far as development projects and infrastructures are concerned. The initiatives that have been put in place in order to develop rural communities in Nigeria are diverse and multifarious. This paper therefore considered these policies and discovered that rural development programmes exist on paper and their impacts are not being felt by the supposed beneficiaries. The study used mainly observation, interview and existing literature to discuss the subject matter. Adopting the ‘elite theory,’ rural development policy makers and implementers pursue elite interests at the expense of broader community interests. It identified that Agricultural Development and Rural Development are not the same. The paper recommended the creation of the Federal/States Ministry of Rural Development, Rural Development Plan Implementation Review Centres (RDPIRCs) and Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Agency (RIMA) as units/departments in rural communities where implementation takes place.

**KEY WORDS:** Rural Areas, Development Programmes, Infrastructures, Rural-Urban Migration

### 1. The Background

After independence, majority of countries neglected rural development and concentrated on the development of urban areas which to them are first point of contact of any nation. It was only in the wake of outbreaks of famine and various diseases which challenged the living condition of the urban dwellers that governments took up this subject. Until the 1990s, rural development strategies were focused on the growth of a modern sector through recourse to fertilizers, improved seedling, irrigation and mechanization (Lacroix, 2011:15). Therefore, Olisa and Obiukwu (1992:iii) said that this remarkable shift from the trend of the post-World War II decades, especially the 1960s (the decolonization decade), during which economic theories and aid programmes focused on growth resulting from national economic development plans and the multiplier effects of massive capital investment. They observed further that it was tacitly assumed that once the national economy developed (featuring such indices as industrialization, modernized agriculture, and modern infrastructure) rural economy would automatically develop.

Asian Development Bank (2014) asserted that rural development has become one of the major aims of various assistance/intervention programmes of both individual developing countries and multilateral institutions/donors. Over the past five decades, Nigeria has never been short of programmes and reforms aimed at alleviating the failing rural economy, livelihood, insecurity and other specific policies associated with poverty alleviation and rural community sustainable development. The Document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) at 50 (2010:618) illustrated that, majority of these programmes developed complications over the years. Since Nigeria gained her political independence in 1960, there has been a great impetus attached to the rural community development as a factor that advances the overall



socio-economic development of the developing countries of the world outside 'Development Administration'. It is this reality as highlighted by Alege (2005:55) that has made the government at different times to set up various programmes and specialized credit institutions in an attempt to transform and develop rural areas in all its ramifications and thereby moving rural dwellers from abject poverty and squalor to economic and social prosperity. He added that some of those programmes and credit institutions are yet on-going, some are moribund and others have gone with the regimes that initiated them. Ibietan and Oghator (2013:308) noted that successive governments have indicated desire to transform the country, be it in terms of provision of infrastructure, human capacity development and even in the realm of social cum political development. In this wise, Nigeria has experimented with several development plans from pre-independence era till date, yet the needed transformation has continued to elude its citizenry in spite of the robust plans.

As a matter of fact, Okoli (2004:ix) in Onah (2004:ix) said, Nigeria has had many Development Plans including the 1<sup>st</sup> National Development Plan (1962-1968); 2<sup>nd</sup> National Development Plan (1970-1974); 3<sup>rd</sup> National Development Plan (1975-1980); 4<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan (1981-1985); the three Rolling Plans 1990-1992, 1993-1995, 1996-1998. There was also Vision 2010 and Nigeria 20:2020, and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). According to Sam (2014:6), there have been attempts by successive regimes in Nigeria at poverty reduction and rural development; the approaches have usually been determined by the interpretation given to rural development by the different regimes or interventionists. Prominent among these programmes as he noted are:

- 1972-National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank,
- 1976-Operation Feed the Nation: to teach the rural farmers how to use modern farming tools,
- 1979-Green Revolution Programme: to reduce food importation and increase local food production,
- 1986-Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI),
- 1987-National Directorate of Employment (NDE),
- 1993-Family Support Programme and the Family Economic Advancement Programme,
- 2001-National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to replace the previously failed Poverty Alleviation Programme, and
- 2004-National Economic Empowerments and Development Strategy. (NEEDS): Meant to achieve poverty reduction through wealth creation, employment generation and value re-orientation.

In the same way, there have been numerous programmes at the Federal, State and Local governments' levels. These include:

- Accelerated Poverty Alleviation Programme,
- School to Land Programmes,
- Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN), 1987
- Community Bank (CB), 1990
- National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA), 1991
- Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLP), 1987
- National Directorate of Employment (NDE), 1986
- The National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme
- Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)
- The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), 1989
- The 7 point Agenda, 2007
- Integrated Community Development Project,
- State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDs),

- Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDs), and
- The Transformation Agenda, etc.

Unfortunately, none of these programmes have been able to radically change the poor standard of living in rural Nigeria as most of them are deficient in in-depth insight and systematic frameworks for realization. In addition, Ilori (1999:93) in Tenuche and Ogwo (2005:126) enumerated other various programmes aimed at developing the rural areas. These include the Agricultural Development Programmes and River Basin Development Authorities, Operation Feed the Nation and the Green Revolution, rural electrification schemes, rural banking schemes, urban and rural water supply schemes, credit schemes to small scale holders through various specialized institutions, transport schemes, health schemes, Universal Primary Education scheme, and low cost housing scheme. These policies show the zeal of different governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which has led to the proliferation of development agencies. Despite the numerous rural development policies introduced at different times by successive governments coupled with the huge financial and material resources employed, little or nothing is felt at the rural level as each policy has often died with the government that initiated it before it starts to yield dividends for the rural dwellers. Onuorah (2006) in agreement with this claim confirmed that not minding the lofty objectives (policies and government initiatives) of such efforts ever endured beyond the government that initiated the schemes. This is paper therefore targeted at considering statement of the problem, consequences of failure of rural development programmes on the nation and concluded with recommendations.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

The wealth which built modern Nigeria whether in the era of dominance of agricultural commodities, or petroleum, was derived from the rural areas. Notwithstanding this, we have witnessed even in the not-too-distant past, the virtual neglect of these areas and their population. The recent phenomenon of massive importation of food and growth of slums in our major cities along with its attendant social, political and economic consequences have been the result of the collapse of the rural economy and infrastructure (Omeruah1985, in Obiukwu, 1992:57).

There is little doubt that Nigerians have reaped more deficits than dividends of rural development programmes. Okhankhuele and Opafunso (2013:186-187) claimed that several methods to remove rural-urban development gap have been carried out in Nigeria with little success, therefore the rural areas still remain highly underdeveloped in comparison with the urban areas. They believed that numerous studies have been carried out on the causes and consequences of rural-urban migration and also related the consequences of rural-urban migration on the urban centers to serious problems such as overpopulation, insufficient physical and social infrastructural amenities.

Some of the past studies linked the causes of rural-urban migration to unbalanced government policies in support of urban development, response to disparities in income, employment and other socio-economic services available within the metropolitan and country sides, with the urban areas being fortunate. Others associated it with impulsive, emotional, structural, and traditional factors.

Moreover, it can be deduced that the cost of depopulation of rural areas is in reduction of rural agricultural produce, decrease in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation, decline in the standard of living, detachment, isolation, underdevelopment, poverty, dullness, ignorance, famine and malnourishment of the rural residents. Also observed is the absence of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the level of Social Progress Index (SPI) in the rural areas. Rural development policies in Nigeria are

characterized by their emphasis on economic development strategies relegating to the background the core issues of absence of critical infrastructures. There are variety of rural development models and programmes devoid of desired achievements as a result of emphasis on agricultural development. In a nutshell, intervention policies more often than not are urban bias, leaving the rural poor to continue in their hardship which Bertolini, Montanari and Peragine (2008:7) identified as the main social and economic problems in rural areas. These are in form of:

- Demographic: low birth rate, negative natural increase, higher mortality rate depopulation, especially due to out-migration by the young people caused by lack of employment, low population density;
- Labour market: low educational status, higher rates of unemployment and long-term unemployment;
- Spatial dimension of poverty as being exacerbated by a poor and deteriorating infrastructure;
- Significant fragmentation of land's ownership.
- Rural welfare being constrained by low levels of income, driven by low wages in rural areas, high unemployment, and low levels of agricultural productivity. Access to basic services (water, sanitary, health and so on) is very limited in rural areas.

There are great disparities in regional development due to a number of factors including history, culture, natural endowment and politics. In the same way, Alege (2005:61) noted that Nigeria has never been bereft of good policies and programmes, the major problem has been poor implementation. Nigeria can be described as a nation that has no specific, well formulated, clear regional development policy or framework (The Document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) at 50, 2010:663). Nigerians have since independence experienced numerous rural community development programmes initiated by successive civilian and military governments beginning with the National Development plans which have not yielded desired results. Omale (2005:148,149) pointed out that rather than being a process of evolution from one stage of strategy to another stage and thus a process of building on past programmes and experience, it has been a process of total change from one strategy to another. He highlighted further that the strategies have been rather numerous and ...not too many successes have been recorded. Despite the whole plans and the development programmes and policies, there are still poverty of socio-economic development and welfare of the people. The proofs are the little level of human development index and prevalent scarcity (Okoli 2004: ix, in Onah, 2004: ix).

The most important thing to observe from the foregoing is the fact that despite numerous rural development programmes adopted in Nigeria from independence to date, the rural areas' situation remains sorry and pitiable. The effect of this is the concomitant phenomenon of rural-urban migration that has manifested in 'urban challenges', characterized by an increase in pressure on socio-economic infrastructure including access to clean and portable water, adequate healthcare, access to basic education, proper sewage and waste disposal systems, amongst others (The Document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) at 50, 2010:663). Overpopulation also places undue stress on basic life-sustaining resources, which ultimately results in diminishing wellbeing and quality of life. It has also created new challenges such as climate change, depletion in resources, food insecurity, social and spatial inequalities, economic instability, urban sprawl and unplanned peri-urbanisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Following these developments, Ogwu (2005:202) posited that the local governments in Nigeria are expected to constitute the grassroots organ that should stimulate and mobilize the rural communities for an integrated development to solve the problems of poverty; unemployment, ignorance, and inequality. The reverse is the case in Nigeria as pictured by Arizona-Ogwu (2007:2) thus:

Local government areas are supposed to be the engines of national development. A quiet rural community grows into a bustling city, and the local leader makes this possible. However, in developed societies, when people are tired of living in the cities they relocate to rural communities

where life is less strenuous. However, the opposite is the case in Nigeria; living in a rural community is difficult, because nothing works, as it should. The local government administrators are part of the problem. Like their counterparts at the federal and state levels, they are mired in pursuit of personal goals at the expense of broader community interests. Any person, who wants to know why the nation is not developing as rapidly as it should, should visit any of the local government area. Life is pressed out of almost everything. The people are financing varied development projects (community hospital, road construction, rural electrification, water projects amongst others), because monthly allocations to local councils are not properly utilized.

According to Ibieta and Oghator (2013:308), the pattern of development in Nigeria creates social problems of hunger, mass unemployment and social inequalities. Another factor is the idea of conceiving development planning as a “big push strategy” which attempts to do everything in one plan. This hampers development efforts as resources are overstretched and little or nothing is achieved in the process. Furthermore, Institutional/structural inconsistencies and discontinuities have been adduced as explanatory factors in plan failures. Governments are scored high on promises, but lacking in delivery and succeeding governments are not committed enough in continuing and completing plans/programmes of their predecessors. In an effort to develop the rural areas, in the submission of Moughalu (1992:129), Third World governments have articulated policies and adopted strategies ranging from single project to integrated project approaches and from community-initiated to government-directed projects. Regrettably, in an attempt to build up the rural areas, attention was not given to the need to come up with an organizational or institutional structure for co-coordinating, collating and synthesizing rural development ideas and projects, and forging a link between the copious rural development agencies and bodies so as to attain harmony of purpose and universal operational effectiveness. Consequently, Ostrom (1971) in Moughalu (1992:29) referred the effect to duplication of functions, overlapping jurisdiction, unnecessary antagonisms and the existence of ‘autonomous units of government’ and the polycentric developmental system.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This paper is built on “Elite Theory” developed to discard the Marxian school of thought that a ‘classless society’ having an egalitarian structure could be realized after class struggle in every society. It gives credence to Marxism as an ideology rather than an objective analysis of social systems. According to Elite theory man can never be liberated from the subjugation of an elite structure. The term Elite in the view of Hornby (2000:376) refers to a group people in societies who are powerful and have a lot of influence, because they are rich, intelligent, etc. Bottomore (1993), and International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (2008) gave that:

“Classic” elite theories were formulated at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century by Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), and Robert Michels (1876–1936). The classic theorists focused on the inevitability of a group of powerful “elites” in all large-scale societies, offering a radical critique of two competing theoretical-ideological streams of thought: the democratic theory (“government of the people, by the people, for the people” in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address), and the Marxist vision of class conflict leading to revolution and egalitarian socialism. In contrast with both of these ideologies, the elite theories suggested an inescapable division between dominant minorities (variously called “elites,” “ruling classes,” “political classes,” “oligarchies,” “aristocracies,” etc.) and the dominated majority, or the “masses”.

The tenets of the theory as noted by Bottomore (1993) and International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (2008) Dinclude:

- The first tenet of the model is power stratification. The increasing complexity of modern society implied progressive bureaucratic organization of all activities and power concentration in the hands of elites, who can effectively manage democratic institutions, accumulate the privileges that power brings, orchestrate mass support, and protect their positions by controlling access to the top.
- The second theoretical tenet concerns the capacity of power holders to organize themselves and form cohesive groups.
- The third tenet concerns the linkages between elites and various “social forces,” such as social movements, classes, and ethno-racial groups.
- The fourth tenet is about access and succession. Entry to the elite ranks depends on acquiring certain rare attributes (e.g., wealth, prestige, education), and it is carefully controlled—directly and indirectly—by elite incumbents. Elites control recruitment of their successors through institutional “gatekeepers” (e.g., corporate hierarchies, political party machines) as well as through elite “selectorates” operating at each level of hierarchical promotion.
- The final tenet highlights the way in which elites typically exercise their power. All elite theorists converge on a view of “engineered” elite domination through persuasion and manipulation, occasionally backed by force.

### **Application of the Theory**

In describing the economic management and ideology of Nigerian Development, Stephen Wright (1993:585) stated that:

Nigeria has kept relatively close to a capitalist model, officially scorning socialism and in the process allowing glaring inequalities to exist within society. To a certain extent Nigeria’s political and military elites have sketched out a path to follow. However, the general corruption of many of those leaders tends to make us conclude that the Nigerian model has developed to benefit those in power, rather than the vast majority of Nigerian citizens.

Usman (2004:11) explained that political office holders in Nigeria are always drawn from the wealthy business classes, schools and universities, professional groups, government administration, religious and traditional conglomerations of authority. Elites in Nigeria enter into politics to amass wealth without shame (Wilmot, 1994 in Uba, 2012:64). For the Nigerian political elite, politics involves not the conciliation of competing demands arising from an examination of the various alternatives entailed by the extraction of resources which can be used to satisfy elite demands and to buy support (Dudley, 1982 in Adedokun, 2013). For this reason, the dichotomy between urban and rural areas in terms of development as perceived by Abah (2000:153) can be traced to the colonial days when Government Reservation Areas (GRAs) were established at various stations, when the ‘Urban Acts’ were used to seize local lands for the white settlement and when the introduction of the capitalist mode of production led to the designation of some settlements, especially those characterized predominantly by colonial activities as urban.

Uba (2012:78) citing Nnoli (1980) supported elite model that rural development evolves from the crying need of the rural population for social welfare services, the unwillingness of the ruling class to provide these amenities, the exploitation of the ruling class of the competition among communities for those social artifacts which are deemed to reflect social progress, and the exploitation by the ruling class of the tendency by Nigerians to invest more time, energy and resources in those tasks approved by their community than in those sanctioned by the national collectivity through the State. Okoli (1980) in Obiukwu (1992:57) contended that community development ideology was hatched by the British colonialists in Nigeria to under develop the people through this manipulative strategy with the instrumentality of Native Chiefs and the Local Governments. He summed up that:

The manipulative strategy has been employed by indigenous rulers in the post-colonial state. This strategy predicated upon the colonial policy of economic exploitation of the local areas, as an

instrument used to sustain the self-interest of the ruling classes while the rural communities suffer under poor, harsh and stagnated conditions.

In the same way, public servants and ex-public servants together with the businessmen, as argued by Awa (1992:7) who also commute from urban centres or reside now in increasing numbers in rural areas, have common interest to control the economy and politics of the rural areas: they have bought up large chunks of residential and farm land and raised the price of such land to a level well beyond the purchasing ability of the peasant; they dominate the improvement unions, the social clubs and the local councils; they have developed new sections of the towns/villages with water and electricity supplied often on a personal basis. He illustrated that the peasants are squeezed together in little huts (in Appendix I) of the traditional sections of the villages, with little or no voice in the decision-making structures, with inadequate and often infertile land for farming and the marginality of their existence is more pronounced now than ever before. Past experience shows that the Federal Government of Nigeria applied a top-down (supply driven) approach to planning and management of rural development programmes resulting in the marginalization of the grassroots recipient communities. As a result, available local government resources for rural development are inefficiently utilized for the purposes intended, thus leaving the people in the local communities in a state of perpetual poverty and under-development (Ocheni, Atakpa and Nwankwo, 2012:132). This reason accounts for position of Anele (2012) who noted that, the major problem is that political office holders are alienated from the grassroots, from the people they are supposed to serve. As a result, they do not really understand the enormity of the sufferings experienced by rural dwellers on a daily basis.

This obvious capitalist approach has concentrated the nation's wealth in the hands of the few. In Nigeria, investment is being poured into expensive prestige projects, often industrial (with an expectation of large "kickbacks" for contractors and government elites), and these did not bring much real benefit to the majority. The unseen hand of the free market system has done its work here too well (Awa, 1992:7).

Ezeani (1995:5) explained that that the exploitative relations between the Nigerian elite classes and the rural poor guarantee that rural development programmes consolidate the pre-dominant economic and political power of the rich dominant classes and the exploitative interests of foreign capital. In contrast, the rural areas have received little investment and were allowed to decay. In the late 1980s the government desperately tried to rectify these policies, revitalize rural areas, and prevent the rural-urban population drift that has placed increasing strains on the urban areas. On the other hand, these policies recorded minimal failure. In the same vein, Ewuim (2010:23-24) acknowledged the fact that:

Most times government does not consult the people during decision making process and so good projects are often sited at places where they are not needed. This defeats the whole essence of rural development. At some other times, these projects are hijacked by politicians, who serve as contractors for the building of the projects. The funds meant for the projects are often embezzled or misappropriated, leaving the projects either undone or abandoned. And because the people are not part of the projects, they lack the knowledge and power to challenge the government and the local collaborators. For instance during the regime of Ibrahim Babangida, his wife, Mrs. Mariam Babangida initiated the Better Life for Rural Women Programme. However, the programme was hijacked by wives of local politicians (wives of local government Chairmen and Councilors). The benefits meant for the rural women through that programme never reached the actual rural women; while the urban elites and their wives cum associates fed fat through the programme

The poverty of implementation of rural development policies in Nigeria can be blamed upon poor leadership, selfish interests, and gross corruption. This has damaged the sustainability of rural development projects as viewed by Tenuche and Ogwo (2005:125). Corruptive tendencies and considerations have also been factors hindering the management of rural development programmes. To this end, Wright (1993:596) share a similar view that in Nigeria, the desire to assist people from one's own community provides a strong impulse for all Nigerians, and Western values concerning impartiality and nepotism do not command much respect, or are never properly implemented. Currently, the Nigerian political elites are still

firmly entrenched in the development, political and democratic structures thereby excluding a majority of the citizens from tangible participation which is the bane of implementation of rural development programmes in Nigeria.

#### **4.0 Conceptualization**

##### **4.1 Rural development and rural area**

The meaning of development has evolved from its earlier narrow conceptualization with economic growth expressed in aggregate economic indicator of GNP to a more broad-based conceptualization as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty (Muoghalu, 1992:77). Rural development is action that helps people to recognize and develop their ability and potential and organize themselves to respond to problems and needs which they share. It supports the establishment of strong rural community development agencies that control and use assets to promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life. It also enables community and other public agencies to work together to improve the quality of government.

Idike (1992:66) in Otigba (2013:16) defined rural development as a strategy designed to improve the socio-economic and social life of the people in the rural areas. He added that rural development constitutes a process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for the improvement and or transformation of the lot of the rural populace. Adelakun (2013:3) believed rural development generally to be the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. He stated further that rural development has traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, changes in global production networks and increased urbanization have changed the character of rural areas. Increasingly tourism, niche manufacturers, and recreation have replaced resource extraction and agriculture as dominant economic drivers.

A rural area as agreed by Olatunbosun (1975:6,7), in Omale (2005:148) is an area with a population lower than 20,000, occupationally specific, locationally removed from an urban area in terms of services e.g. water, health, electricity, etc (and as far as Nigeria is concerned poorly provided for. Measured by the index of demography, Nigeria is 80% rural). Therefore, Anele (2012) hypothetically said; that life in the rural areas is hard, rustic and sometimes inhuman cannot be overemphasized. Many rural dwellers are traumatized by poverty, starvation and diseases. It has been succinctly observed that:

There is a realization that a dangerous gap exists in the development levels of both urban and rural areas. This seems to be threatening the political and social stability (of the nation). Despite the fact that an overwhelming proportion of our national population reside in the rural areas, the rural areas are characterized by depressingly meagre annual per capita income, pervasive and endemic poverty, manifested by widespread hunger, malnutrition, poor health, general lack of access to formal education, liveable housing and various forms of social and political isolation compared with their urban counterparts (Muoghalu, 1992:77).

In an explicit description, DPR (2001:19) in Roberts (2014) explained that the term rural is highly cryptic as some urban cities in Nigeria have very poor areas and what is described as rural in general terms are clearly noticeable. She understood rural areas to make up of space where homes and infrastructure occupy very small space and most of the landmark is dominated with fields, pastures, forest, water, mountain and desert (Appendix III).

It can be observed that in Nigeria, poverty is particularly severe in rural areas, where up to 80 per cent of the inhabitants live below the poverty line, and social services and infrastructure are inadequate. In spite of Nigeria's abundant agricultural wherewithal and oil riches, poverty is prevalent in the country and has increased since the late 1990s. Some 70 per cent of Nigerians as ascertained by Roberts (2014) live on



less than N160 (\$1) a day. She alleged further that majority of the rural poor are located in areas resourcefully poor, ecologically vulnerable and very limited or poor infrastructure. They have no land asset, little or no capital and very limited employment opportunities besides farming and fishing. Sam (2014:5) perceived rural development to be far – reaching transformation of the social and economic structures, institutions, relationships and processes in any rural area which encompasses equitable access to arable land, more equitable distribution of income, widespread empowerment in health, nutrition and housing, greatly broadened opportunities for all individuals to realize their full potentials through education and strong voice for all rural people in shaping the decisions and actions that affect their lives.

Asian Development Bank (2007) averred that rural societies live in a simple environment, yet the structure and the dynamics of their day-to-day life is complex. Poverty and underdevelopment are synonymous with rural settings of the developing countries of the world (with Nigeria inclusive). Abah (2000:151) perceived that the deplorable condition of the Nigerian rural sector is emphatic. The rural population constitutes the Nigerian peasantry, the Nigerian poor and the country's largest illiterates groups (Obiukwu, 1992). The rural poor are heterogeneous group which includes small-scale farmers, the landless, nomads, pastoralists and fishermen and they share common disabilities: limited assets; poverty; malnutrition; environmental vulnerability and lack of access to public services; poor medical facilities; persistence of local endemic diseases- sometimes without cure- which reduces the quality of the labour force; premature death; a dependent, deprived womenfolk; unproductive, subsistence agriculture; etc (Abah, 2000:151).

Bale (1999); Gop and WB (2000) in Asian Development Bank Institute (ADB) (2007) viewed rural development to include the provision of social and physical infrastructure, the provision of financial services in non urban areas, non-farm and small-medium enterprises activities in rural communities and market towns that are more closely linked to the rural economy than they are to the economies of the larger urban cities, as well as the development of traditional rural sectors, such as agriculture and natural resource management. It noted the key elements that will facilitate the realization of rural development to include social infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and financial services. The dynamics of these three elements pave the way for the upliftment of the living conditions of rural households. Observing events and issues related to such dynamics can facilitate the measurement of the constructs of rural development. Ewuim (2010:25) evaluated rural development from the point of improvement of socio-economic and financial sides of the rural dwellers lives to the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment among the people thereby, giving them a sense of belonging.

Rural development as Omale (2005:148) perceived is the bringing of a change in the status of “things” or “situations” in areas with small populations which areas are characterized by simple occupations, are remote from urban areas and poorly provided for in terms of services. As examined by Tenuche (1992), in Tenuche (2005:122), rural development involved the mobilization and allocation of resources available in the rural areas for the benefit of rural dwellers and for the general upliftment of their standard of living. Also, Ogeidefa (2010:3) alleged rural development to be an integrated approach to food production, provision of physical, social and institutional infrastructures with an ultimate goal of bringing about good healthcare delivery system, affordable and quality education, improved and sustainable agriculture, etc. rural development can be simply understood to be creation of infrastructural facilities that bring about a high standard of living in the villages.

## **5.0 Effect of Rural Underdevelopment**

### **5.1 Rural-Urban Migrations**

The non-implementation of rural development programmes over the years in Nigeria has manifested in the claim of (Adefolalu, 1977), in Okhankhuele and Opafunso (2013:87) that the rural areas in Nigeria are

being affected by several incapacities in various levels of severity such as: inaccessibility, seclusion, underdevelopment, poverty, drabness, boredom, ignorance, depopulation, hunger, and all types of sicknesses. It is the general consensus amongst writers such as Udo (1997), Makinwa (1981), Adepoju (1990), Essang and Mabawonku (1974) in Okhankhuele and Opafunso (2013:188) and others that Migration from rural to urban areas leads to a reduction in the number of rural populace and that: This has a negative effect on rural agricultural output and thus hinders the pace of development in the rural areas. Migration of youths takes away the glamorous social life in the rural areas, leaving the area in a gloomy state. The youths migrate from the villages taking along their energy and vigour, and leaving behind the feeble old men, women and children to labour on the farm since farming is their major occupation. This has led to a reduction in agricultural produce with its consequential effect on the gross domestic product of the nation, lowered funds for development, income and standard of living of rural inhabitants, underdevelopment, and total desertion of the rural areas. Rural areas in Nigeria lack socio-economic facilities including: pipe borne water, electricity, motor able roads, industries, high paid employment. They undergo a lot of deprivations. All these have confined the rural areas in Nigeria to a vicious circle of poverty.

Lykke (2002) affirmed that one big worry about rural-urban migration is that it is most likely the highly educated and most agile people that migrate from rural to urban areas, leaving behind the very frail and mainly uneducated people who are not able to combat poverty successfully. This he alleged adds to a rise in the differences in the standards of living of the rural and urban inhabitants.

Ocheni, Atakpa & Nwankwo (2012:132) opined that this has resulted in the under-development of the rural communities; thereby, forcing more qualified people to migrate from the rural communities to the major towns and cities where, as most people say, "it is happening". They agreed that, most highly qualified professionals at community level migrated to the urban areas, leaving only a handful behind. The overall impact of this dearth of professionals at the local level has compounded the problem, making development at that level an impossible task.

Roberts (2014) had this observation when she said urban migration has also led to shortage of both skilled and unskilled labor in the rural communities. Rural workforces see themselves in as individuals on transit while awaiting better opportunities to migrate to the cities in hunt of a better option of survival. Equally, Ogeidefa (2010:1) reiterated that, Onibokun (1987) sees rural development to be faced with the paradox that the production oriented rural economy relies heavily on non-productive people who are ill-equipped with outdated tools, technical information, scientific and cultural training and whose traditional roles and access to resources pose problems for their effective incorporation into modern economic systems, whereas the consumption oriented urban economy is flooded with people who are either unemployed or unemployable, or marginally employed or underemployed in the urban centres where they choose to live. As a result of this mass exodus, the rural areas have become qualitatively depopulated and are progressively less attractive for social and economic investments while the urban areas are becoming physically congested, socially unhealthy and generally uneconomic to maintain.

## **5.2 Poverty and Underdevelopment**

Furthermore, rural poverty in Nigeria is evenly distributed across the country, rather than strong in specific geographic areas. In some areas in the North bordering the Niger, the condition is getting worse which is infertile, marginal to agriculture, environmentally damaged and densely populated (Arhewe, 2014). The fishing communities living in the mangrove swamps and along the Atlantic coast are also part of the poorest in the country.

Generally, the demand for labour in rural Nigeria is seasonal and full of reservations; the country's poor rural depend mostly 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. The disproportions created as a result of these attributes have produced huge disparities in income level between rural and urban areas, unemployment and underemployment resulting in unmitigated poverty for majority of rural Nigerians.

Farmers, teachers and government officials with little or no training in relevant skill set rely heavily on families in urban areas for support and often times take up multiply part-time jobs in all forms of rural enterprises as a survival strategy. Finally, vital input such as transportation facilities, electricity, water, business premises and information are lacking in rural economies because of inadequate government attention. Effective real demand and markets penetration remains very low due to the poverty that pervades the rural scene (Olawepo, 2002 in Uba 2012:79).

### **5.3 Incessant Insecurity**

While the end of the cold war saw a dramatic decline in inter-state conflicts, the number of civil wars increased. This is especially true in the poor regions of the world; particularly Africa as attention of ordinary people shifted more towards seeking economic, social, political and environmental conditions that will lead to improvement in their lives. Where such aspirations could not be met through normal political process violent means were used, resulting in instability in the region. This is particularly true in the West African sub-region (Apogan-Yella, 2005:1).

It is therefore important to note that this menace of insecurity is high due to the underdevelopment of the rural areas. This statement is supported by the words of Clinton (2013) that prosperity has always been concentrated in and around urban areas. In spite of the recorded economic growth in the country, the government demonstrates ineptness and impotence in bringing about social and infrastructural development. Thus, Koko (2012:2) gave that it can be innocuously argued that the State has failed to establish the institutional framework for the promotion, management, and maintenance of security and provision of public goods.

## **6. Findings**

In specific terms, it is observed that for decades, rural development programmes in Nigeria are characterized with:

- Absence of Rural Development Policy Implementation Review Centres (RDPIRCs) in rural communities where implementation takes place.
- Lack of Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Agency (RIMA) as a framework that will improve the social welfare and rural infrastructural security.
- Lack of Federal, States and Local governments Ministry/Department of Rural Development at all levels in Nigeria.
- Non-availability of holistic rural development policy to develop a dynamic system of rural settlements.

## **7. Contribution to knowledge**

There is this belief by succeeding governments and literatures that rural development is one and the same with agricultural development. Literature has shown that developmental efforts of the government and donor agencies were geared towards agricultural development and rural economic growth. This has made these governments to create and thrust money into agricultural development which has led to the creation of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. However, the previous studies did not show that, agricultural development and rural development are not the same. This is a missing link which this paper shall fill with a view to ensuring that the creation of Federal Ministry of Rural Development will bring about the provision of modern infrastructure, primary health care, food and shelter, employment opportunities, recreational facilities, affordable and essential primary and secondary education, adult and

nomadic education, and other incentives into rural sector. Consequently, agricultural development should primarily be concerned with the economy of the rural people.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Urban communities are products of implemented development programmes. Therefore, proper managed villages' acts as catalysts for economic progress and centres of opportunity as mechanisms of poverty prevention and creativity, as well as mechanisms of poverty alleviation since they offer opportunities for economic activities and wealth creation. There is no overstressing the fact that the government, donor/non-governmental agencies and individuals need to understand the forces shaping the growth of urban areas and responds appropriately to the rural areas so that they can become engines of economic growth and industrialisation.

The quest for a broader perspective rural communities' development approach has created more focus on a wide range of development goals rather than ordinarily creating incentive for agricultural or resource based businesses. Availability of education, entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure, and social infrastructure all play an important role in developing rural areas in Nigeria. At the moment, rural development needs to be given right of way. Several reasons for such necessity include high and unacceptable rate of poverty, poor access to social and economic infrastructure and services such as access to safe drinking water supply and sanitation, higher rate of health indicator such as infant mortality rate, malnutrition and disease prevalence and lower enrolment of children in school. It is therefore recommended that:

- There should be creation of Rural Development Plan Implementation Review Centres (RDPIRCs) in rural communities where implementation takes place. This will assist to constantly review the conditions for efficiency in service delivery. These centres should lay emphasis on poverty reduction, employment generation, and transportation improvement, village upgrading, and making the environment conducive for living, working and recreation.
- There should be establishment of Rural Infrastructure Maintenance Agency (RIMA) so as to improve the social welfare and rural infrastructure security. This will ultimately enhance the achievement of efficient functioning communities and towns in the context of continuous growth in population, economic activities and better standard of living conditions.
- The creation of the Federal/States Ministry of Rural Development like its counterparts of Housing and Urban Development is long overdue. Agriculture and rural development should be detached from each other so as to create a dividing scope between rural infrastructures and rural economic matters. The above recommended agencies should then be made as departments/units under the ministry.
- There should be holistic rural development that will develop a dynamic system of rural settlements, to foster sustainable economic growth, to promote efficient rural community development, and to ensure improved standards of living for the rural dwellers.

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**APPENDIX I: EXAMPLE OF A RURAL NIGERIA SETTING**



**Source:** Field Survey (2014).

**APPENDIX II: Rural Northern Nigerian Houses**



**S o u r c e : A r h e w e ( 2 0 1 4 ) .**  
**APPENDIX III: Rural Economy Setting in Nigeria.**



**Source:** Field Survey (2014).