



A Critical Analysis of the Impact and Challenges of Selected Rural Development Programmes in Nigeria

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Abstract

It is the responsibility of governments to provide equal opportunities to their citizens irrespective of their socio-political, or economic placement, especially due to the existence of a wide dichotomy separating urban and rural areas. It is, however, evident that the difference in terms of standards of living between urban and rural dwellers is more apparent in under-developed and developing countries. To bridge this gap, however, many African governments began to implement various rural development programmes to at least, improve the human conditions of rural dwellers. The paper uses a qualitative methodology of desk literature survey, where content analysis was used. It also critically analyses four selected rural development programmes in Nigeria, which are; Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme, Rural Electrification Scheme, the Rural water supply scheme, and Integrated Rural Development Scheme. The study found out that despite the fact that the Nigerian government in collaboration with the international community has spent billions of Naira to improve the lives of rural dwellers, such programmes recorded little or no success. The paper concluded that this failure could be attributed to poor government assessment plans, improper monitoring mechanisms, the widening gap between theory and practice, lack of full commitment in Nigeria's National Development Planning programmes from the 1960s to the 1980s, amongst others. It is also established that the socio-economic and political challenges of rural societies in Nigeria remain recurrent problems bedeviling all administrations since the attainment of self-governance in 1960.

Key words: Rural development programmes, government policy, infrastructural development, Nigeria, National Development Planning.

Introduction

Since the 1950s, rural development programmes have been of great concern to the Nigerian government (Nwachukwu & Ezeh, 2007; Daneji, 2011; Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). The central focus of most of these programmes was to improve the living conditions and economic opportunities of rural communities through the provision of full access to basic social amenities such as infrastructure, education, healthcare services, and other important services. It was along this trend that the Nigerian government established the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) to boost agricultural production and improve the livelihoods of rural farmers, especially in the 1960s (Auta & Dafwang, 2010; Madu & Wakili, 2012). These ADPs were designed to provide extension services, inputs, as well as credit to farmers. The same programmes also promoted the adoption of modern agricultural techniques to maximize agricultural production.

For instance, in the 1970s, the famous River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) were introduced by the Nigerian government to harness water resources with a view to developing irrigational farming, particularly in rural areas (Adams, 1985; Anyebe, 2015; Ogundele, 2019). Other important services the RBDAs provided cut across rural electrification, as well as road construction so as to lay a solid foundation for the transport of goods and services linking rural production to the consumer-dominated urban centres.

From the 1980s to the 1990s, other developmental programmes such as the National Accelerated Food Production Program (NAFPP), as well as the Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP) were put in place to increase food production and self-sufficiency (Musa, Abdullah, & Wahid, 2016). These two programmes focused largely on the provision of inputs, credit, and extension services to farmers, the development of agro-processing industries in rural areas, the promotion of small-scale credit to rural entrepreneurs, as well as training and capacity-building programmes.

Despite the Nigerian government's efforts aimed at the introduction and implementation of rural development programmes, especially in recognition of the importance of rural development to economic growth and poverty reduction, such programmes faced a lot of challenges with little or no success, particularly in their implementation and sustainability (Raheem & Bako, 2014; Eze, Lemchi, Ugochukwu, Eze, Awulonu & Okon, 2010; Ocheni, S., & Nwankwo, 2012; Asemah, Anum & Edegoh, 2013; Kamar, Lawal, Babangida & Jahun, 2014; Ering, Otu & Archibong, 2014; Brown & Wocha, 2017).

The pride of any government is the attainment of a higher level of development in such a way that its citizens would enjoy the dividends of democracy. However, for a nation to achieve development, certain important prerequisites are taken into consideration. These factors include socio-political and economic stability. Failure to factor in such prerequisites paved the way for widening economic gaps between developed and developing countries. It is estimated that the majority of the world's population in developing countries lives in abject poverty. The problem of the urban population, rural stagnation, unemployment, and growing inequalities also continue to grow, while hopes of accelerated development either become difficult or impossible to realize. These problems further translate into a number of more frightening socio-economic and political challenges such as insurgency, radicalization, banditry, and corruption, as well as the loss of brighter futures for the youths. Development is, however, essential and critical to the growth and sustenance of any country.

In order to successfully enhance meaningful development, effective strategies must be evolved. On this basis, therefore, the paper examines the trends of four selected government efforts geared toward development programmes with a view to appreciating and analyzing them. These selected rural development programmes in Nigeria were (1) Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme (2)

Rural Electrification Scheme (3) Rural water supply scheme, and (4) Integrated Rural Development Scheme. The paper argues that despite the fact that huge sums of money have been injected into these projects, there is little success as the programmes tend to raise more important questions than actually solving the problems at stake. This failure is, therefore, attributed to factors such as poor government assessment plan, corruption, the widening gap between theory and practice, lack of full commitment in Nigeria's Development Planning programmes from the 1960s to the 1980s, as well as a lack of orientation and community sensitization to motivate rural dwellers on importance of the designed programmes to their socio-economic and political well-being.

Methodology

This paper is qualitative desk research, and a phenomenological design was adopted for the study. A secondary source of data was obtained through government publications in the form of the four National Development Planning documents, and relevant extant literature. This includes; books, journal articles, theses and dissertations. An effort is, however, made to corroborate these data with a view to arriving at an objective analysis. A content analysis method was also used in the paper.

Conceptualizing Rural Development

Before delving into the discussion, it is, however, imperative to conceptualize the concept of rural development, which is viewed differently by various scholars. For instance, Phillips (1986) states that rural development is a process of improving the quality of rural dwellers in relation to their social well-being. According to him, such a process has three major components, which include; (i) Raising rural people's living standards such as income and consumption level of food, medical services, and education (ii) creating conditions conducive to the growth of rural people's self-esteem through the establishment of socio-political and economic systems and institutions, which promote human dignity and (iii) increasing rural people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables. Aziz (2015) on the other hand, opines that the concept of rural development must be approached holistically. He argues that such an approach recognizes the complexity and inter-relatedness of the many variables, which influence the quality of life, especially in rural areas. He also states that it is a complex process that involves the interaction of economic, social, political, cultural, technological, and other situational factors. Based on this argument, it can be deduced that the ambit of rural development is so wide to the extent that it requires a comprehensive approach. This is largely because apart from the fact that it generates new employment, it also provides more equitable access to land, equitable distribution of income, and widespread improvement in health, nutrition, and housing, including the creation of incentives and other opportunities. Rural development also deals with the ability of the government to create wider opportunities for individuals so as to realize their full potential through education and knowledge-sharing, and in the decision-making processes that affect their ways of life.

An Overview of Rural Development Programmes in Nigeria through the Four National Development Plans

Prior to the late post-colonial development programme, which include the rural areas of Nigeria, it is important to note that all subsequent developments in all spheres of life were built on the basis of the country's National Development Planning (NDP). From 1962 to 1985, Nigeria had a total of four National Development Programmes.

The First National Development Plan (1962-68) was launched in 1962 with the hope of being implemented within a span of six years (Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1962). A capital

expenditure of ₦2,132 million naira was proposed for the implementation of the plan and the execution of its projects, part of the total expenditure of public sector investment in the plan amounted to ₦1,352.3 million, whereas ₦780 million was assigned to the private sector (Adedeji, 1971). It is important to note that sectorial financial allocations in the public sector investment show transport, trade and industry, electricity, primary production, as well as education to be the dominant sectors that attracted the largest percentage of financial allocation. However, out of the total capital expenditure of ₦1,352.3 invested by the Public Sector, about 13.6% was allocated to primary production and 13.6 per cent to trade and industry, while sectors such as electricity, transport and education were allocated 15.1, 21.3 and 10.3 per cent respectively (Table 1).

Table1: Total Planned and Actual Capital Expenditure 1962-1968.
(Public Sector)

Sector	Planned Expenditure (₦ million)	% of Total Planned Expenditure	Actual Expenditure (₦ million)	% of Total Actual Expenditure
I. Economic	963.6	71.3	675.3	62.9
1. Primary Production	183.5	13.6	105.0	9.8
2. Trade and Industry	180.5	13.6	95.1	8.9
3. Electricity	203.5	15.1	161.4	15.0
4. Transport	287.6	21.3	242.2	22.6
5. Communications	60.0	4.4	22.1	2.0
6. Water (excluding Irrigation)	48.5	3.6	49.5	4.6
II. Social Overhead	282.8	20.9	162.3	15.2
7. Education	139.5	10.3	91.3	8.5
8. Health	34.2	2.5	14.9	1.4
9. Town and Country Planning	84.5	6.3	39.3	3.7
10. Co-operative & Social Welfare	17.3	1.3	7.4	0.7
11. Information	7.3	0.5	9.4	0.9
III. General Administration	98.6	7.2	209.6	19.5
12. Judicial	1.9	0.1	2.5	0.2
13. General	96.7	7.1	207.1	19.3
IV. Financial Obligations				
14. Financial Obligations	7.8	0.6	25.8	2.4
Total	1,352.3	100.0	1,073.4	100.0

Source: National Planning Office, Federal Ministry of National Planning, Lagos.

Despite the great effort made by the Nigerian government toward national development across sectors of life, table 1 shows that the first National Development Plan document only paid attention to the cities and town with little or no regard for the rural areas. This arrangement had a lasting repercussion of rural development, especially in the 21st century. Though there was a categorical mention of cities in the Plan, rural areas are treated at the periphery.

The Second National Development Plan, which spanned the period of four years (1970-74) was launched few months after the end of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) in line with the federal government's 3Rs programme of reconstructing the facilities destroyed by the war, as well as

promoting economic and social development throughout the country (Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1970). The Plan proposed a capital expenditure programme of ₦3.192 billion during the four years (Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1970). This amount was distributed between the public and private sectors. Although the nominal public investment programme was ₦2.100 billion, the effective size of the programme was ₦1.560 billion, while the private sector was expected to make an investment of ₦1.632 billion (Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1970). The implementation of this capital programme was expected to contribute in the rise of the gross output of the economy from ₦3.028 billion in 1969-70 to ₦3.987 billion in 1973-74 (Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1970). The average growth rate expected throughout the Plan period was about 7 per cent per annum (Table 2).

Table 2: Planned and Actual Public Capital Expenditure 1970-1974.

Sector	Planned Expenditure (₦ million)	% of Total Planned Expenditure	Actual Expenditure (₦ million)	% of Total Actual Expenditure
I. Economic	1,779.1	53.1	1,099.1	49.0
1. Agriculture	268.0	8.0	173.2	7.7
2. Livestock, Forestry & Fishery	63.7	1.9	45.4	2.0
3. Mining	36.7	1.1	20.9	0.9
4. Industry	192.4	5.7	88.5	4.0
5. Commerce and Finance	45.3	1.4	56.3	2.5
6. Fuel and Power	108.6	3.2	113.0	5.0
7. Transport	901.8	26.9	516.8	23.1
8. Communications	129.2	3.9	54.2	2.4
9. Resettlement & Rehabilitation	33.4	1.0	30.8	1.4
II. Social	889.6	26.5	616.2	27.6
10. Education	400.0	11.9	254.6	11.4
11. Health	152.6	4.6	112.0	5.0
12. Labour & Social Welfare	41.4	1.2	28.3	1.3
13. Information	86.8	2.6	41.6	1.9
14. Town & Country Planning	64.0	1.9	49.8	2.2
15. Water & Sewage	144.8	4.3	129.9	5.8
III. Administration	607.9	18.1	476.4	21.3
16. General Administration	261.7	7.8	476.4	10.9
17. Defence & Security	346.2	10.3	231.7	10.4
IV. Financial Obligations				
14. Financial Obligations	73.6	2.2	46.0	2.1
Total	3,350.2	100.0	2,237.7	100.0

Source: National Planning Office, Federal Ministry of National Planning, Lagos.

A closer look at table 2, it is obvious that like in the First National Development Plan document, the second one has also failed to considerably prioritize the rural development programmes as an

integral aspect of the national planning programmes. This is more so as over 90 per cent of the monies disbursed for all the projects go to sectors that are more related to the cities. A direct mention of town and country planning in the planned document is enough testimony to that.

The Third National Development Plan (1975-80), however, mentioned in clear terms its primary objective, which was aimed at achieving a rapid increase in the nation's productive in order to improve the peoples' standard of living (Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1970). Though this Plan and the previous one claimed to improve peoples' standard of living, it was only the third National Development Plan, which was launched in 1975 that put it in practice. While the first and Second Plans envisaged capital expenditures of ₦2.2 billion and ₦3.2 billion, the original expenditure of the Third Plan was placed at ₦30 billion, while the public sector's share, which was initially ₦20 billion was later revised to ₦43.3 billion (Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1970) (Table 3).

Table 3: Planned and Actual Public Capital Expenditure 1975-1980

Sector	Planned Expenditure (₦ million)	% of Total Planned Expenditure	Actual Expenditure (₦ million)	% of Total Actual Expenditure
I. Economic	26,651.2	61.5	17,187.4	58.4
1. Agriculture	1,681.3	3.9	975.6	3.3
2. Irrigation	639.0	1.5	828.2	2.8
3. Livestock	486.8	1.1	183.1	0.6
4. Forestry	135.6	0.3	85.8	0.3
5. Fishery	100.0	0.2	34.4	0.1
6. Mining and Quarrying	2,645.9	6.1	1,470.0	5.0
7. Manufacturing and Craft	5,485.9	12.7	2,569.7	8.7
8. Commerce and Finance	776.0	1.8	518.9	1.8
9. Co-operative and Supply	208.7	0.5	207.1	0.7
10. Power	1,285.3	3.0	1,721.4	5.9
11. Transport	9,677.5	22.3	6,814.1	23.2
12. Communication	3,529.2	8.1	1,779.1	6.0
II. Social Services	5,011.8	11.6	4,048.0	13.8
13. Education	3,222.1	7.4	2,994.5	10.2
14. Health	1,172.9	2.7	602.9	2.1
15. Information	387.2	0.9	337.4	1.1
16. Labour	27.4	0.1	1.3	0.0
17. Social Development, Youth & Sports	202.2	0.5	111.9	0.4
III. Regional Development	6,034	13.9	3,114.4	10.6
18. Water Supply	1,549.0	3.6	871.0	2.9
19. Sewerage, Drainage & Refuse Disposal	462.3	1.0	84.0	0.3
20. Housing	2,256.4	5.2	1,200.2	4.1
21. Town and Country Planning	1,589.3	3.7	766.5	0.7
22. Community Development	177.0	0.4	192.7	0.7
IV. Administration	5,616.5	13.0	5,084.1	17.3

23. Defence and Security	4,350.2	10.0	2,852.4	9.7
24. General Administration	1,266.3	3.0	2,231.7	7.6
Total	43,313.5	100.0	29,433.9	100.0

Source: National Planning Office, Federal Ministry of National Planning, Lagos.

Contrary to the provisions of the first two National Plans, the Third one was better. This is because it took into consideration special regard to community development, Social Development, Youth & Sports, irrigation, forestry, fishing, as well as cooperative and supply. Some of these issues such as irrigation, cooperatives, and community development are more peculiar to the rural areas. This Plan document was a great milestone in the government's effort to promote rural development programmes in Nigeria, which is the central focus of this paper.

The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-85) was launched in 1981 to cover the period 1981-85. It was intended to complete the process of establishing a solid base for the long-term economic and social development of Nigeria. Emphasis was, however, placed on key sectors such as agriculture, particularly food production, manufacturing, education, manpower Development and infrastructural facilities (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981). Emphasis was also laid on social services, especially housing, health and water supply with the hope of improving the quality of life in both the rural and urban areas (Table 4). This plan also has its distinctive features. It has a projected capital expenditure of about ₦82 billion, the Plan was considerably bigger than all its predecessors (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1981). One unique aspect of it was that it was the first Plan in which local governments participated in their own right following their constitutional position as a distinct level of government with specific responsibilities. They participated in preparing the Plan and had their own separate programmes under the Plan. Among the specific objectives set for the Fourth Plan period were to; (1) increase in the real income of the average citizen (2) reduce the high level of unemployment and under-employment (3) increase in the supply of skilled manpower (4) reduce over dependence of the economy on a narrow range of activities (5) balance development – that is, the achievement of a balance in the development of the different sectors of the economy and the various geographical areas of the country.

Table 4: Summary of Public Sector Expenditure of the Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985)

Sector	Planned Expenditure (₦ million)	% of Total Planned Expenditure	Actual Expenditure (₦ million)	% of Total Actual Expenditure
Economic				
1. Agriculture (Crops)	2,962.7	7.0	925.5	5.3
2. Rural Development			279.0	1.6
3. Water Resources	2,000.0	4.7	1,712.0	9.9
4. Livestock	252.8	0.6	1,712.0	9.9
5. Forestry	97.2	0.2	50.2	0.3
6. Fishery	87.3	0.2	46.0	0.3
7. Mining and Quarrying Petroleum & Energy	5,409.0	12.8	1,498.4	8.6
8. Manufacturing and Craft	6,368.0	15.1	2,322.1	13.4
9. Commerce and Finance	286.5	0.7	38.2	0.2
10. Co-operative and Supply	32.5	0.1	11.2	0.1
11. Power	2,400.0	5.7	357.0	14.5
12. Transport	6,790.5	16.1	2,507.3	14.5
13. Communications	2,000.0	4.7	716.8	4.1
Sub-Total	28,686.5	67.9	10,598.7	60.9
Social Services				
14. Education (including N.U.C) Science and Technology	3,050.0	7.2	1,483.9	8.6
15. Health	1,200.0	2.8	432.9	2.5
16. Information	300.0	0.7	169.3	1.0
17. Labour	74.5	0.2	13.6	0.1
18. Social Development, Youth & Sports	150.0	0.4	43.3	0.3
Sub-Total	4,774.5	11.3	2,143.0	12.5
Environmental Development				
19. Water Supply	-	-	-	-
20. Sewerage, Drainage & Refuse Disposal	-	-	-	-
21. Housing and Environment	1,619.0	3.8	800.0	4.6
22. Town and Country Planning	2,648.0	6.3	69.1	0.4
23. Community Development	-	-	-	-
Sub-Total	4,265.0	10.1	869.1	5.0
Administration				
24. Defence and Security	3,940.0	9.3	2,026.4	11.7
25. General Administration	534.0	1.3	602.7	3.5
26. Federal Capital Territory	-	-	1,094.5	6.3
Sub-Total	4,474.0	10.6	3,723.6	21.5
Grand Total	42,200.0	100.0	17,334.4	100.0

Source: Federal Ministry of National Planning.

Like the Third Plan, the Fourth one was also robust in both its expenditure and coverage. This has also taken into consideration the rural areas. However, despite this great effort, a categorical mention of rural areas like the cities is also missing.

Analysis of Selected Rural Development Programmes in Nigeria: Impact and Challenges

Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme

This programme was introduced by the government and its three main objectives were to; (1) support infrastructure in rural areas (2) Maintain basic infrastructure facilities and (3) Construct culverts and retaining walls in newly formed roads. The programme also adopted a Community Development approach where members of the community are expected to participate in the execution of the programme (Boudet, Jayasundera & Davis, 2011; Adesida & Okunlola, 2015). This program was funded by the Federal government of Nigeria while working in partnership with the World Bank, and the Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute.

Impact and challenges

The programme has made a significant impact because there was a reduction in waterborne diseases among the rural dwellers because of the availability of good water supply systems such as boreholes. This development in effect, improved the living condition of rural dwellers. One of the key challenges of the programme, however, is that many rural areas in Nigeria have not witnessed a total infrastructural development. For instance, in Oyo State, rural areas were provided with the construction of boreholes, schools, and medical centres but the government does not make an effort to maintain that infrastructure, while the rural communities are left with the challenge of maintaining them. This is also coupled with the fact that in most cases, the projects are of low quality.

Rural Water Supply Scheme

Access to safe drinking water is required by all communities regardless of the area, average income, average level of education, geographical region, race, and ethnic or cultural background (Akpoy & Muchie, 2011). For many rural communities in developing countries, unreliable access to safe drinking water remains a large and growing concern (Eva, 2015). In Nigeria, for instance, water supplies are not only inadequate but also dwindling (Ali, 2012). In fact, Ezenwaji et al (2016) report that millions of people in Nigeria, particularly in the countryside, still depend on unimproved drinking water sources (shallow well, springs, rivers, ponds, canals, stored rainwater, etc.) for their water needs. Due to the outgrowing number of these challenges, the federal government has in various instances adopted programmes such as the Rural Water Supply Scheme to address the need for qualitative and quantitative water supply in rural areas in Nigeria.

The major objectives of the Rural Water Supply Scheme were to; (1) Establish, control, and manage new and existing water supply and (2) Provide potable, qualitative, and quantitative water supply. The programme adopts demand driven and community participation approach where water users were required to be fully involved in the planning, development, operation, and maintenance of water facilities. The aim was to promote a sense of ownership and sustainability of water service delivery (Cherlet & Venot, 2013). The scheme was funded by the initial capital cost of the Federal government of Nigeria. Later, it was also funded by grants from Trust Fund and African Development Bank, as well as executed in partnership with the World Bank and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Impact and challenges

The challenges of poor and unsustainable service delivery in the rural water sector are having an adverse impact on both the rural dwellers and the rural economy in Nigeria (Ezenwaji et al., 2016). Unfortunately, governments and donor agencies have not been able to find a lasting solution to the challenges of poor and unsustainable service delivery in the rural water sector in the country. Close to half of all low- and middle-income countries of the world, including Nigeria, have not achieved rural water supply sustainability (WHO & UNICEF, 2014).

Research has also shown that rural water supplies in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly those relying on hand pumps, often demonstrate low levels of sustainability (MacDonald & Davies, 2000; Harvey, 2007; Harvey, 2008; Mvongo, Defo & Tchoffo, 2021). The key causes for this include inappropriate policy or legislation, insufficient institutional support, unsustainable financing mechanism, and ineffective management. The problem can only be solved by adopting a holistic approach to planning and implementation rather than focusing on one issue (such as community management or spare parts supply) in isolation (DFID, 2004). Okorie et al (2001) are of the opinion that the development of a national technology policy for funding and accelerated rural water supply should be guided by a number of elements such as (1) investment and development programming (2) prioritization of maintenance operations (3) community-agencies cost-sharing policy (4) systematic co-ordination mechanism (5) institutional development and capacity building (6) community education and participation (7) community-based water and environmental health committees (8) water quality and environmental health monitoring and treatment (9) information management system and (10) rural water supply and sanitation research agenda.

Rural Electrification Scheme

The Rural Electrification Scheme was basically informed by two main objectives viz.; (1) Increase access to electricity to 75% and 90% of renewable energy and (2) Expand access to electricity that can be cost-effective. This scheme adopted decentralized, as well as demand-driven and technological approaches (Adejumobi et al, 2013; Shaaban & Petinrin, 2014; Juanpera et al, 2020). The rural electrification scheme was also funded by the Federal government of Nigeria, along with grants, donations, and loans from different international agencies. Besides, the program partnered with public and private organizations, banks, and equity investors.

Impact and challenges

The program has made a reasonable impact in some rural areas in that it improved the living conditions of the rural populace, it provided better social facilities with better equipment at home, medical centres, and schools. Nevertheless, the programme lacks accurate and up-to-date data. Also, the growing demand for electricity has outpaced supply and population growth. There is also a lack of technical capacity to fully upgrade the rural areas in Nigeria with a standard electricity supply.

Integrated Rural Development Programme

The integrated rural development programme was introduced primarily for the purpose of increasing the productivity of the agricultural sector of the economy, while at the same time improving the living standards and incomes of rural dwellers. This was to be accomplished through the provision of a package of such incentives as credit facilities, fertilizers, pesticides, improved seeds, training, and extension services by the governments. The program was designed to attract matching funds from

the World Bank. These were to supplement contributions from state governments. The scheme also made a provision for such development of infrastructural facilities that are directly connected to agricultural production (D'Silva & Raza, 1980; Nkom, 1981; Akinola, 1996). The focus of this was mainly on agricultural production. The major **objectives** of the programme were (1) Agricultural diversification (2) Reducing the level of unemployment and (3) Improvement in the living standard of rural dwellers. The program adopted Bottom-up, Structural, and decentralized approaches. The program partnered with the World Bank, equity investors, and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Impact and challenges

Idachaba (1980) points out that the programme was not as integrated as it claimed. This is because it did not embrace other issues that are central to massive rural development. Moreover, the programme was also highly expensive, and could only cover a very limited area of the country (World Bank, 1981). In addition, the integrated rural development projects were mainly planned by foreign experts who did not adequately understand the attributes of the local communities in which the programme was designed to operate, while input from local communities was virtually minimal. Meanwhile, the term 'integrated' implied that the socio-economic issues in the rural areas ought to have been factored into the agricultural development projects. In effect, concerns such as increased incomes, employment, housing, general infrastructure, and related issues should have been better integrated with increases in agricultural production

Discussion of findings

In Nigeria, over the years the stated objectives and strategies of rural development programmes have been pronounced by policymakers and those concerned with the issue of development. However, there still exists an enormous gap between policy formulation and implementation, as well as the reality of the level of development of the rural populace. This is because the government does not put much of its effort, resources, and time to undertake thorough research in relation to the actual needs of the rural community, their total population and evaluate the success and challenges of previous similar programmes in order to adopt a more effective strategy. On the contrary, the government assumed that the success of every programme lies in the ability to plan it well, and, therefore, forgetting to make an adequate enquiry on the subject matter concerned. This important stage is in most cases missing in the various programmes in Nigeria, which are targeted to improve the living standard of its citizens. It is saddening that the government is also making use of the population census of 2006, which was outdated and hence, cannot meet the actual needs of the citizens. This underestimation also impacted negatively on many rural development programmes in Nigeria.

Furthermore, some objectives of the programmes were not specific and realistic and thus, failed to be achievable. For instance, although the Integrated Rural Development Programme claimed to adopt a more decentralized, participatory and demand-driven approach, it comes along with the challenge of the unwillingness of rural community members to participate because of a lack of awareness and sensitization on the benefit of participating in the programme. In some instances, however, programmes are not implemented in line with the stated approaches and objectives.

It is equally important to state that, in Nigeria today, policies and strategies to enhance rural development have enjoyed the general attention of foreign governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGO), which collaborate with Nigeria in different areas of economic, political and social sectors. Visible among these organizations are the

United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, DFID, the United Nations Organization, as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The cumulative impacts of the policies, programmes and activities of these institutions and organizations significantly affect the living conditions of ordinary Nigerians and to a large extent, the development and success of the rural areas.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper appraised four selected rural development programmes introduced by the Nigerian government namely: Rural Infrastructural Development Scheme; Rural Electrification Scheme; the Rural water supply scheme; and Integrated Rural Development Scheme. The paper concluded that despite the great effort of the Nigerian government in spending huge sums of money to ensure that the main objectives of these rural development programmes were achieved, it recorded very little success. This paper, therefore, attributed this failure to a number of factors such as poor government assessment plan, improper monitoring mechanisms, the widening gap between theory and practice, lack of full commitment in Nigeria's Development Planning programmes from the 1960s to the 1980s, as well as a lack of orientation and community sensitization to motivate rural dwellers on the importance of the designed programmes to their socio-economic and political well-being. It is also established that the socio-economic and political challenges of rural societies in Nigeria remain recurrent problems of all administrations since the attainment of the country's political independence.

The paper recommends that a deliberate attempt must be made by the government to come up with rural development programmes that address the actual felt need of rural dwellers such as improving their income level by improving agriculture with modern equipment and rural infrastructures that will make it easier to transport their agricultural produce, it is also recommended that proactive measures must be put in place to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of rural development programmes this will go a long way in ascertaining its likely challenges and make adjustments where necessary to yield desired impact. Concerted efforts must be made by political leaders in showing political will to see that the programmes initiated are well implemented. This is because, no matter how laudable a programme objective was; without a political will its implementation will be a mirage.

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