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RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA (1965-1999) : A CRITICAL APPRAISAL AND THE WAY FORWARD.

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Abstract

It is a known fact that rural communities in Nigeria have continued to suffer from utter neglect. Government in recognition of this has initiated different strategies and at different times to transform the rural areas. Unfortunately these strategies have not solved the problems of the rural dwellers. This paper examines the various strategies adopted by government in rural development. It postulates that only a people-centred-approach to rural development can create the needed impact in our rural areas. Thus the researcher has advocated the community-based organisation approach.

Introduction.

Rural development according to the report of 1972 Conference on Regional Planning and Economic Development in Africa held at Ibadan was seen as "the outcome of a series of quantitative and qualitative changes occurring among a given rural population and whose converging effects indicate, in time, a rise in the standard of living and favourable changes in the way of life of the people concerned" (UNEP for Africa 1972:19-25). According to this report, rural development involves a comprehensive development of the rural area. It does not refer to the isolated programmes of community development, 'rural animation', 'mass education', 'agricultural extension', 'health and nutrition extension' or any of the terms applied to sectoral programmes which are carried out in the rural areas or within the rural community (Ekong 1988:499).

Starting essentially from the UNO which declared the 1960s as the First Development Decades, tremendous attention has been focussed on the issue of development in general and rural development in particular among governments and scholars alike. The works of Seer (1969, 1977), Lerner (1968), Roxborough (1979), Williamson (1965), Lele (1975), Rostow (1960), Lipton (1977), Dewilde (1967), Chenery et al (1974) and others have been very popular in this regard, (Atte, 1986:138). This flurry of interest and activity arose from the effect of the reconstruction programmes, which came after the 2nd World War. By then most of the underdeveloped societies were characterised by low output, low capital formation, distorted economies and in particular poverty which manifested in low standard of living. The effect of this became so serious that specific efforts in the guise of rural

development have become necessary to redress the situation (Atte 1986:138).

It is pertinent to observe that in Nigeria the conception of rural development has followed the conception of the colonial masters who viewed the idea from increased productivity of the export cash crop sector. The objective of rural development at that time was mainly economic participation at the micro level and changes in rural attitudes, which encompass adoption of Western technology and the rejection of indigenous values, arts and technology. This idea was however re-evaluated by Nigerians with the view of adopting more scientific ideas of rural development. The new ideals involve the following objectives:

- a) Spread of development more equitably throughout the society.
- b) The integration of the various development efforts into a comprehensive system.
- c) It integrated the goals of development (for instance increased income, welfare and employment) such that they are not mutually exclusive.
- d) The restructuring of the socio-economic and political systems on the basis of a popularly shared development ideology.
- e) The maximum mobilisation of domestic human and material resources for self-reliance.
- f) The closing or narrowing of the gap between rural and urban areas.

Successive governments in Nigeria have emphasised the need to alleviate poverty in the country. The slow level of growth of the economy in the immediate post-independence period motivated government to formulate policies targeted at directly improving the living standard of the population. Hence a lot of policies and programmes have been designed at one time or the other to meet the special needs of the poor or at least to reach them. Unfortunately, these programmes are unco-ordinated both spatially and temporally (Atte 1986).

Nigerians in the rural areas have continued to experience persistent hardship and lack of access to resources for the alleviation of poverty. The pattern of development since independence has remained unbalanced, while the impact of programmes and policies of government have not been felt by the poor. Despite the government endorsement of "The People Centred Development approach and its strategy for attaining this, most Nigerians especially in the rural areas have remained completely poor. The challenging issue for Nigerians is the alleviation of poverty or at least a reduction of poverty and the creation of wealth for its people. This could only be achieved when people are empowered to create their own livelihood. Poor macroeconomic environment which arises from ineffective policies and programmes, the absence of specific socio-economic policies for the poor and political instability in the country have combined to aggravate mass poverty and intensify underdevelopment.

Like other developing countries, the Nigerian government in the past have made some frantic efforts at solving these problems with such programmes like Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green

Revolution Programme, NDE, PBN, DFRRI and most recently the Family Economic Advancement Programmes. These programmes were aimed at reducing poverty and minimising the income disparities between the rich and the poor in the societies. But unfortunately, these programmes have not bettered the lot of the rural dwellers. Each and every strategy had some problems associated with it either at the level of introduction or at the implementation level. One of the notable problems associated with these strategies was that they handed-down development packages to the people, without looking at the people's felt need. (Ake 1989).

In short, these approaches to development were not people-centred hence the low impact it created amongst the rural people. These and other reasons form the basis of this work which aims at prescribing solutions or suggesting an alternative development strategy in Nigeria. (The community based approach). The work which is purely descriptive (based on library research) is also aimed at advising Government on the need to adopt a new policy of development.

Rural Development Strategies In Nigeria

Some political theories like Claude Ake have argued strongly against rural development strategy for rural development which is identifiable. Rather, we had only gotten development plans, consigned to paper as a formality for the sake of appearance and largely forgotten and that we have had development related policies some of them useful and some not, most importantly, we have had the occasional enthusiasm launched with fun-fare as new development strategies. This include import substitution, green revolution, indigenization, integrated rural development and the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). They maintained that these feats of enthusiasm come suddenly and disappear just as suddenly leaving us no wiser and no better off and sometimes more confused. Ake believed that when our British Masters (Colonialists) left, the people who led the nationalist struggle shrank from transforming; they received colonial system; rather they decided to inherit it; that is; to maintain it and enjoy its benefits. Once they made this choice, their leadership no longer made any sense; their legitimacy and ability to lead were decisively undermined. The possibility of changing this situation was ruled out, by the pattern of political incompetence which emerged at independence. It was a Hobbesian pattern of competition, rendered so by an exceptionally high premium in political power. Of course, this was the colonial legacy. The nationalist leaders saw that the capture of state power was decisive in every sense - so they struggled bitterly for it. Driven by the urge of state power, they sought power without restraint and politics gradually deteriorated to warfare. Shortly after independence, the struggle for power led to political collapse and to civil war, and then military rule. In these circumstances, the prospects of a development strategy became even more remote as rulers struggled for survival in a sieged mentality.

Other theorists have maintained that Nigeria has adopted some rural development strategies over the years. These include

- * expansion and diversification of agriculture, export commodities, import substitution, export promotion, integrated rural development and a basic needs approach.

Changes In Rural Development Strategies In Nigeria

A) Increase and Diversification of Export Strategies

Since rural development was viewed vis-a-vis the increase of goods, this strategy was popular during the early years of independence and it continues to recur in development plans. It involves the expansion and diversification of agricultural export commodities. The appeal of this strategy came mainly from the sources. Firstly, it was one of the few options available in the immediate post colonial era. It involved directing the development effort along the line of least resistance especially when one recalls that during colonialism African countries and specifically Nigeria was geared to the production of agricultural commodities. They relied on this pattern of production for sustaining the population for government revenue and for foreign exchange earnings. Under pressure to earn foreign exchange for development projects, Nigeria was tempted to turn to the expansion of agricultural export commodities helped in dealing with the problems of disarticulation, narrow resources base and industrialisation.

The strategy met with only very modest success. Firstly, the developed market economies were reluctant to allow free access to the commodities of agricultural producers in Nigeria. This reluctance has been overcome as seen in the Lome Conventions between the African - Caribbean Pacific Group of countries and the European Economic Community.

The problem of accessibility to western market was not the only cause of the failure of this strategy. There was also the problem of demand which arose from the shift in the consumption patterns of developed countries towards a preference for consumer durable, from the available synthetic substitutes, and from the slow rate of increase of population in the developed countries.

This strategy also suffered as a result of the fall in export earnings caused by international economic forces which could not be counteracted by attempted stabilisation schemes. The slow response of agricultural products to changes in demand, and the differences in the elasticity of the supply in export demand contributed to the failure of the strategy.

In fact, without the above difficulties, the strategy would still have been a failure because of its endemic potentials for perpetuating the exploitative dependence of the Nigerian economy on the metropolitan economics. It sees development in terms of export gaps, export earnings stabilization arrangements and access to the markets of industrialised countries and discourages attention being paid to the self-reliant evaluation and exploitation of local resources and local capabilities.

a) Import Substitution

This was one of the earliest strategies adopted in Nigeria which was probably caused by the decline in the demands and earnings. By

import substitution the country could be supplying the market from local sources, save foreign exchange and promote domestic industrialisation. Secondly, import substitution was held to be necessary to correct the differences in the income elasticities for import and exports. Import substitution projects set up behind high tariff walls spurred a modest growth in the manufacturing sector. But the policy failed. Growth occurred only in low technology areas such as textile and food processing. Because of this and the constraints of technological dependence, value added was very limited.

This strategy was disappointing because even on the levels of economics, there was perhaps not enough critical understanding of the limitations of import substitution as a means of generating development. As Peter Kilby (1969) concluded "Because the industrial surveys do not distinguish imported input purchases and so do not show profits, it is impossible to determine whether Nigeria's import substitution has resulted in a saving or organisation of the foreign exchange requirement per unit of consumption".

c) Export Promotion

Another strategy adopted for rural development was export promotion. The strategy was adopted to solve some problems namely: industrialisation, self-reliance, a better balance of trade, savings in foreign exchange and the diversification of the economy. This strategy has some advantages over import substitution. It is not limited by the size of the domestic market. It is less prone to lead to subsidisation of inefficient production and it tends to require less imported intermediate inputs. But it also had some notable disadvantages:

- a) It is limited by the external demand.
- b) It offers a less flexible and perhaps more limited scope for the expansion of linkages.

d) The Unified Approach to Rural Development:

This approach to rural development was adopted at the instance of United Nations resolution 1491 (XLVIII) of the Economic and Social Council. This resolution pointed to the need for an approach which would integrate the economic and social components in the formulation of policies and programmes geared towards rural development. The objectives included:

- (i) To integrate all sectors of the population in development.
- (ii) To effect structural change which activate all sectors of the population to participate in development process.
- (iii) To aim at social equity, including the achievement of an equitable distribution.
- (iv) To give high priority to the development of human potential.

This approach is conceived not as the increase of an aggregate quantity like GNP but as growth and changes of a pattern of or complex of social and economic factors. It implies observed progress towards a set of goals or values: but it implies the objective changes taking place which underlie the observed progress. But unfortunately, the unified approach had little or no influence on

public policy. The idea of "Unified Development" with its structural and distribution implications, presents many more difficulties of a political nature than does the idea of development as growth of the national product—growth measured in aggregate terms that conceal distribution and differentiation.

Integrated Rural Development

This approach was better known among policy-makers than the unified approach. This involves the focusing of development effort on the transformation of rural society of Nigeria. This focus is justified by the fact that about 75% of Nigeria's population live in the rural areas and the fact that agriculture is the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. It assumes that the focussing of development on rural society will ensure maximum benefit to the most people as well as the growth of the entire economy.

The general meaning of integrated rural development is clear but the concept lends itself to a wide range of operational definitions. Almost any system of welfare measures undertaken in rural areas can be called integrated rural development, same like any system of extension services or agricultural improvement programmes especially when it involves social amenities can be called integrated rural development. But having taken advantage of the suggestion of being 'progressive' by using the concept of integrated rural development for political legitimisation, the idea is trivialised by the types of programme designated as integrated rural schemes. In a sense the idea of integrated rural development becomes something of an ideology which at once confers legitimacy and conserves the system, by acknowledging the need for change while promoting only marginal change.

An Appraisal of Rural Development Strategies in Nigeria

Before the Nigerian Civil War in 1967, development was viewed in terms of the Gross Domestic Products. Rural development was viewed in terms of food production within the country. To this end, efforts were made by the successive governments towards self-sufficiency in food production, from the implementation of the programmes of the third National Development Plan to the present. This was contrary to and a marked departure from Nigeria's former 'anti-food policy adopted before the 1970s. Nigeria in the third development plan had come to realise the danger of food dependency and was increasingly aware of the intention of the U.S.A. to use food as a weapon (Apelcorn, 1981). So the strategies adopted were addressed to general agricultural development for the extraction of primary product for export. The aims of the food policy was carried out in programmes and projects such as the Operation Feed the Nation, the National Accelerated Food Production (NAFPP), Agro-Service centre programmes, River Basin Authorities and the World Bank supported agricultural development projects. These efforts were made in order to achieve large-scale mechanised food production.

Operation Feed the Nation and Agricultural Development Authority

This programme was launched in 1976. It was designed to highlight to Nigerians the deteriorating food situation in the country and to promote the involvement of the citizens in agriculture and food production. It was also meant to provide basic infrastructure for food production and storage and thus reduce the level of food imports into the country. The ADPs had as their main objectives increase production of food and fibres as well as producers' incomes. These were basic measures to boost food production. Unfortunately, OFN Operation Feed the Nation and ADPs were heavily criticised for lack of coherence and thrust, poor execution and limitedness in scope (New Nigeria 1989:1). This probably was the cause of its changes and it gave way to a new policy — The Green Revolution in 1980.

The Green Revolution

The Green Revolution like its predecessor OFN, was also targeted towards increased food production for the achievement of self-sufficiency in food production and the promotion of cash crops cultivation to diversify the country's export base which was clearly dominated by crude oil. Both programmes (OFN) and the Green Revolution) include in their target population for food production, the small-scale farmers, large private and commercial farmers and government agencies.

The Green Revolution has been seen as a reversal of the objectives of the OFN and self inconsistent, for, while it was targeted towards self-reliance in food production, it was, on the other hand importing large stocks of food into the country. Overall, both schemes had failed to achieve their set objectives of self-sufficiency in food production. It is clear from the above that efforts made towards food self-sufficiency were reactionary and frantic. In a situation of this nature, speed often overtakes reasons.

As Apeldcorn (1981) observed less food has been produced in Nigeria in the 1970s than was the case in 1980s. Nigeria according to him in the 1970s was faced with a twin problem; that of food shortage as well as increasing demand for food as summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Percentage increase in Food Demand

Selected Commodity	1975	1980	1985
Maize	36.31	66.60	11.34
Millet	29.43	58.20	79.73
Sorghum	29.46	58.24	999.73
Rice	56.91	101.19	171.91
Wheat	31.65	75.80	150.33
Yam	27.84	52.49	83.39
Cassava	28.02	52.49	85.65
Cowpea	40.76	73.91	123.10
Palm oil	40.70	73.87	123.10
Groundnut	41.20	74.27	123.83

Source: Extratcted from Abomore S.I (1983)

As may be observed from the Table, there were large percentage increase in demand for food from one period to the other for the ten-year period. On the other hand, growth rates of supply for some of the crops was low and in some cases negative. As will be seen in Table 2 below, the estimated output of the major stable foods showed a similar trend in the year 1986-1987. Food production and supply were observed to be lagging behind increases in population growth.

Table 2: Estimated Output of major agricultural commodities ('000 tons)

Crops	1986	1987	% change between 1986-1987
Maize	1,336	1,202	-10.0
Millet	4,111	3,905	- 5.0
Sorghum	5,455	5,182	- 5.0
Rice	283	297	- 4.9
Yam	5,209	4,886	- 6.6
Cassava	1,564	1,486	- 5.0
Beans	732	688	- 6.0
Shrimps	1.6	1.3	-18.8

Source: Extracted from CBN Annual Report 1982.

In a situation of declining supply and increasing demand for food, Nigeria had to search for a way of improving the food supply situaton to avert a political crisis. Inevitably, massive importation of food became the most handy solution.

The Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)

The most recent effort directed towards the formulation of agriculture and food policies aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in food production and ultimately, food security came to light in 1986. The objectives of the policy include:

- a). achieving an increase in domestic food production with a view to improving nutritional standards, reducing and eventually eliminating external dependence on food supply.
- b). increasing domestic supply of agricultural raw materials and reducing dependence on imported raw materials.
- c). improving production of exportable cash crops thereby diversifying the export base of the economy.
- d). raising rural employment and income.
- e). achieving a regional optimal crop production mix reflecting the comparative advantage of each Agro-ecological zone (National Concord, 1989:9).

Programmes formulation and implementation were to be guided by:

1. A focus on small scale farmers as the 'centre piece' of the nation's food and fibre production.
2. Support by the Federal Government for agricultural and food production within the context of Agro-ecological zones.
3. Implementation of programmes to be the responsibilities of State and Local Governments with Federal Government support.
4. Effort made to present a class of unintended beneficiaries of public policy (Selected Speeches of IBB, pp. 146-147).

In addition, a number of other measures were introduced including the liberalisation of agricultural loans to small-scale farmers, abolition of import duty on agricultural equipment, creation of agricultural commodities and a national strategic grain reserve scheme (National Concord 1989:10).

The aims of agricultural policy were:

- (a) To achieve self-sufficiency in food production by 1992 and provide food security for the nation and to make agricultural sector the mainstay in the Nigerian Economy.

The operation of agencies such as Agricultural Development Project and the River Basin Development Authority were expanded and streamlined to help in the achievement of the policy.

The admirers of the policy have seen it as offering a dramatic change in direction from previous policies. They point to the statistics of increases in outputs of staple foods and successes in DFRRI's Programmes of wheat production, inputs supply, grain storage facilities and the provision of supporting infrastructure to boost increased food production (New Nigeria 1989:11, Concord 1989:10). But in spite of the reported increase in the estimated outputs of staple food, prices of foodstuff even in the rural areas where most of the staple foods are produced have increased between 1987 and 1992 in most states of the country (CBN Report, 1989:19, 24), DFRRI was noted to duplicate the functions of other agencies such as state ministries etc. This situation does not portray a rapid

growth rate in food production which would bring nearer to fulfilment of the nation's objectives of self-sufficiency in food. Though this strategy was well conceived the implementation left many in doubt and the rural areas with little improvement.

Structural Adjustment Programme

With the failures of previous plans to achieve self-sufficiency in food production, there was need to resort to food importation as a short term palliative. Importation of food was brought to an abrupt end "officially" with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme and the food policy which placed a total ban on certain food items such as rice, wheat etc. This introduction was a new dimension to the development situation. With the supply of choice food in decline and with the consequent increases in prices (retail food price index had risen from 164, 4 in 1970 to 591.5 in 1977 especially for the low income group (Onimode, 1983).

Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)

This is the most current strategy adopted by the government. It is an investment promotion and poverty alleviation programme introduced by the Federal Government for the purpose of stimulating appropriate economic activities in the various wards of each Local Government Area of the country. It aims at providing capital needed by way of loans directly to people at ward level to enable them set up and run cottage enterprises and reduction of rural-urban migration.

This programme though newly introduced have been seen to duplicate the functions of other agencies. Its method of co-ordination has not been clearly stated. The state co-ordinating committee, local government co-ordinating committee, ward co-ordinating committee all seem to be performing the same functions.

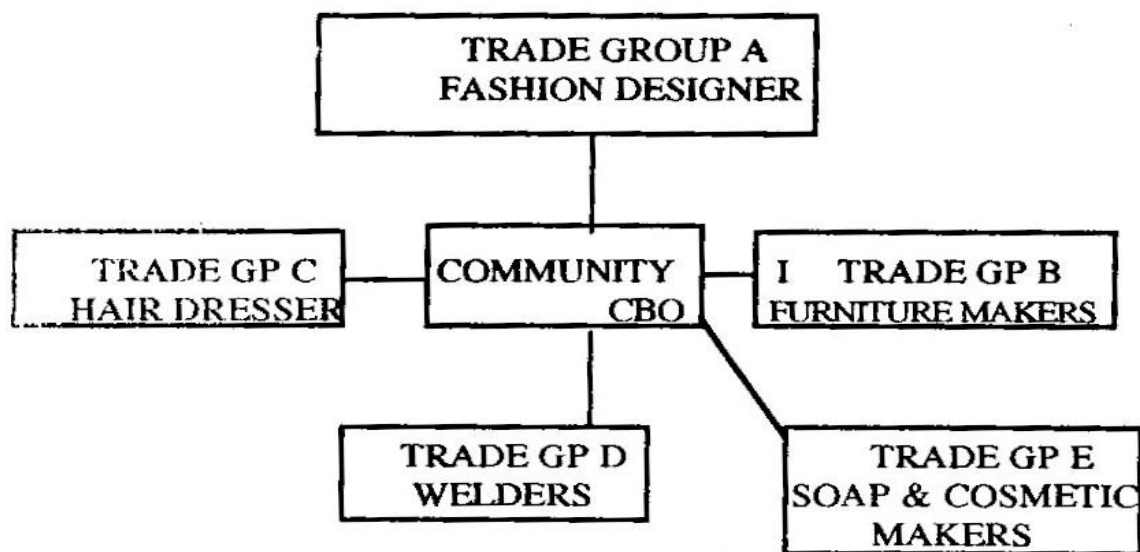
Towards Effective Rural Development Strategy

(The Community-Based Organisation Approach)

The researcher has tried in the section above to explain that most of the past efforts adopted by Nigerian government to develop the rural areas had failed to achieve the desired aims. The reason is not far fetched, using the words of Nzimiro, that "the ideas of the ruling class are antagonistic to the ideas of the ruled - the peasants", who are the main residents of the rural areas, "and the urban slum-dwelling working class" (Nzimiro, 1985:73).

The main challenge for achieving true rural development in Nigerian, therefore, is to evolve a new development strategy; a strategy where development processes will empower the rural people, where sustainable livelihoods can be created and stable lives in healthy communities can thrive. For this to happen, a new development ethics and morality has to be placed at the care of development thinking and practices. It must include the perspective and the realities of rural living.

To achieve this, the researcher suggests the use of community based organisations (CBOs) in our rural areas. Community Based Organisations (CBOs) are made up of people in different trade groups within a particular rural area. These people are grouped by sex, common ideology, geographical location and circumstances where they find themselves. Simply put, CBOs consist of trade groups put together to protect specific interests and achieve some set goals. It is pertinent that in any rural area people are involved in different trades. These people often form groups based on their trades. The process where these trade groups (one, two, or three even more) come together to form an organisation is what is referred to as community based organisations. The organisation members (the trade groups) will choose the type of business they want to initiate, contribute money and manage their business.



The essence of the formulation of community based organisations is to bring development to the grass-roots especially with the current emphasis on forming co-operatives. It implants in people the group concept approach to business and indeed emphasized the people centred a approach to business.

Community based organisations are characterised by the following:-

1. The organization is owned and managed by the rural people: hence, any development programme channelled through this body will surely be 'people-oriented'.

2. Members of the organisation can easily raise capital and they are very conversant with what the people need. Thus, understanding the felt- needs of the people.

3. The organization facilitates the process of having credit facilities e.g. collection of loans.

4. Provision of information on existing facilities e.g information about government, NGOs and NASSI.

5. The Organization can liaise with government if need be for the provision of development programmes in a rural area.

6. It helps in educating members who are inexperienced within the group.

7. It helps to market the products.

It is worth mentioning that through community based organisation some communities have procured FEAP (Family Economic and Advancement Programme) loans. The community based organisations (where they exist) have formed themselves into viable co-operative societies and have gotten approval for loans from government.

What is needed on the part of the CBOs is the prudent management of the resources approved for it. The government on its part should regularly organise seminars and refresher courses for the leaders of these organisations.

It is the belief of the researcher that if the government will support and pass through the community based organisations for any development programmes, they intend to provide, before long all our rural societies will experience development.

Conclusion

For a very long period of her history, Nigeria has been in a dilemma about what strategy to adopt in rural development. The time has come for a decision on what to do. This is born out of the fact that production and implementation of a rural development strategy is a serious matter. It is a grand design born out of deep reflection, careful analysis and clarity of purpose. It calls for discipline, stamina and a rare combination of idealism and pragmatism. We need to adopt strategy that will enhance self-sustained growth and reduce our exploitation dependence. We should create political conditions and climate which will put development on the agenda. We need a people centred approach, thus a CBOs approach. This is the only approach which puts the wealth of the nation in the hands of its producers. It is also the only way which can help the Federal Government to succeed in their development programmes in the next millennium.

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