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Rural Development Initiatives Under the Military and Civilian Regimes in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Nigeria's post-independence governance structure has been characterized by frequent military intervention beginning from January 15, 1966 when the first military coup disrupted the First Republic civilian government. Given the oscillation between the military and civilian regimes, this paper attempts a comparative review of rural development practices as a way of measuring the differences between the military and civilian governance. The review observes that rural development in Nigeria was relatively better focused during the military regime than what is obtainable under the civilian democracy. However, long years of military rule characterized by frequent regime changes made it impossible to set standard and build effective rural development institutions. Given that long years of military rule had inhibited whatever progress that would have been achieved in rural development, the paper argues that the emerging democratic regimes have not shown significant political commitment for improvement because of excessive politicization of development plans, fragmented and uncoordinated planning, poor implementation practices, a lack of continuity in policies and, corruption among several other problems. The paper observes that post-military rural development practice is not significantly different from the practice under the military especially when viewed against its narrow policy contents and focus. Given these observations, the paper argues for a much

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broader conceptualization of rural development beyond agricultural development and improvement of living standard to incorporate a broad range of social opportunities to improve the general capabilities of the rural areas.

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1. Introduction

Rural development as a concept has no clear and comprehensive definition. Ploeg *et al.* (2000) had argued that the notion of rural development emerged through socio-political struggles and debate. Once, it was part of the discussions that is associated with agriculture and countryside. In such context, Ward and Hite (1998) linked rural areas with 'remoteness' often characterized with single, central market-such as the marketplaces for the outputs of small, agricultural producers in past centuries. This notion is also related to Hite's (1997) argument that rural be understood as a point on a Thunen plain, characterized by 'remoteness' from the main centre. Ploeg *et al.* (2000) reported studies that show that while some see rural development as a process that will end with the final expropriation of farmers, others regard it as a force that will revitalize agriculture (the authors cited Broaekhuizen *et al.*, 1997).

A survey of literature has shown that the concept of rural development has evolved over the five decades ranging from community development, green revolution, integrated rural development to increased attention to sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction (Ashley and Maxwell, 2001; Ploeg *et al.*, 2000; Ward and Hite, 1998; Maxwell and Heber-Percy, 2001). Ashley and Maxwell (2001), for instance, observed that the evolution of mainstream policy on rural development is located on two axes-representing the balance between productive sectors and social sectors, and between state and market. For instance, in the 1960s the Green Revolution was associated with large-scale state investment in infrastructure, research, and support for adoption of new technology. In the 1970s, budget priorities shifted somewhat to the social investments required by integrated rural development programmes. In the 1980s came the structural adjustment where public sector institutions were trimmed and budgets cut, while the 1990s witnessed an upsurge of interest in poverty reduction.

The above analyses show that the notion of rural development changes depending on the dominant context. But in terms of basic meaning, the general consensus is that rural development refers to the process of improv-

ing the quality of life and economic wellbeing of the people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. In African context, rural development has historically centred on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, globalization and expansion in urban settlements have tended to de-emphasize rural agriculture and resource extraction due to the rise in the phenomenon of rural tourism and recreation as new avenues of rural development. How has this trend been translated in the general conceptualization and practice of rural development in Nigeria at post-independence?

This paper attempts a comparative analysis of rural development practice in Nigeria within the context of military dictatorship and civilian democracy. To help in achieving such comparison, the paper is organized into sections. The next section, following this introduction, gives the general overview of the post-independence governance structure as well as the general socio-economic background of Nigeria with particular reference to rural areas. The third section discusses the various rural development plans over the years of military and civilian governance to see how rural development have been conceptualized and translated into practical impact. The fourth section discusses key distinguishing highlights of rural development practices between the military and civilian regimes in a comparative manner as a way of gaining a better insight on approaches, distinguishing features, best practices and impacts associated with each governance contexts. The fifth section highlights the summary of findings as well as drawing some conclusions.

2. Nigeria: Post-Independence Governance Structure and Socio-economic Background

Post-Independence Governance Structure

Nigeria's post-independence governance structure has been characterized by frequent military intervention beginning from January 15, 1966 when the first military coup disrupted the First Republic government led by Alhaji Tafawa Balewa. The pioneer coupists which was led by Major General J. T. U. Ironsi was immediately replaced in another set of military coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon on July 29, 1966. Shortly, the government of Gowon was confronted with the outbreak of a civil war in 1967 as a result of the secessionist bid of the then Lieutenant Colonel O. Ojukwu. Gowon used his tenure to fight for a united Nigeria which ultimately materialized in a ceasefire in 1970. The Gowon military administration lasted upto 1975 and was replaced by another military regime led by Murtala Muhammed, who himself, was assassinated in July 29, 1976. Murtala

Muhammed's assassination brought in Olusegun Obasanjo in 1976 which lasted up to 1979.

Beginning from 1979, the Obasanjo's military administration led Nigerians in a brief return to democracy when power was transferred to civilian regime led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The military coup of 1984 led by General Muhammadu Buhari overthrew the Shehu Shagari civilian regime and, Buhari's regime did not last as it was overthrown in 1985 by General Ibrahim Babangida. Babangida made effort to return Nigeria to a democratic system in 1992 through a democratic election which was later annulled in a manner that generated serious crisis among the populace. The consequent crisis and violent agitation arising from the June 12, 1993 election prompted the setting up of an interim civilian regime which was led by Ernest Shonkan in 1993. That regime was later overthrown same year by the military coup that was led by General Sani Abacha. The death of Sani Abacha in 1998 automatically ushered in a new military leader led by Abdulsalami Abubakar.

Nigeria attained democratic governance in 1999 when it elected Olusegun Obasanjo as the new democratic president. This brought to an end almost 33 years of military rule (from 1966-1999) excluding the short-lived second republic (1979-1983). Obasanjo had survived two democratic tenures (1999-2003 and 2003-2007) before handing over to another civilian administration that was led by Alhaji Umaru Yar' Adua in 2007. Yar' Adua died on May 5, 2010 paving way for Dr. Goodluck Jonathan (his former vice president) to be sworn in on May 6, 2010 as the substantive President of Nigeria. Goodluck Jonathan secured a fresh democratic tenure in 2011 and was sworn-in on May 29, 2011 to serve a four-year term which will end in 2015.

General Socio-economic Background

A great majority of Nigeria's population resides in the rural areas. For instance, the 1963 Census recorded 80.7% of the national population as rural residents. By 1985, the proportion had slightly gone down to 70.13% and was estimated that a further drop to 69% in the proportion was expected in the 1990s (Muoghalu, 1992). In 2005, it was estimated that 53% of the Nigerian populace resides in the rural areas and in 2011, the world Bank reports recorded 51.6% of Nigeria's rural population. The general consensus seems to be that the rural areas in Nigeria are very heavily populated. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, contributing about 45 per cent of GDP. The agriculture sector employs about two-thirds of the country's total labour force and provides a livelihood for about 90 per cent of the rural population. Nigeria is the world's largest producer of cassava, yam and cowpea – all staple foods in sub-Saharan Africa. It is also a major producer of fish. Yet it

is a food-deficit nation and imports large amounts of grain, livestock products and fish. Apart from serving as the agricultural base for the country, the rural areas constitute the major sources of capital formation as well as huge markets for domestic products (Olatunbosun, 1975; Abdu and Marshall, 1990; Olayiwola and Adeleye, 2005). Indeed, the rural areas are involved in primary economic activities that are important in sustaining the entire Nigerian economic system.

Despite Nigeria's plentiful agricultural resources and oil wealth, poverty is widespread in the country and has increased since the late 1990s. Over 70 per cent of Nigerians are now classified as poor, and 35 per cent of them live in absolute poverty (IFAD, 2011). Poverty is especially severe in rural areas, where up to 80 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line and social services and infrastructures are limited. The country's poor rural women and men depend on agriculture for food and income. About 90 per cent of Nigeria's food is produced by small-scale farmers who depend on rainfall rather than irrigation systems. Surveys show that 44 per cent of male farmers and 72 per cent of female farmers across the country cultivate less than 1 hectare of land per household (IFAD, 2011). This implies that Women play a major role in the production, processing and marketing of food crops.

Rural infrastructure in Nigeria has long been neglected. Investments in health, education and water supply have been focused largely in the cities. As a result, the rural population has extremely limited access to services such as schools and health centres, and about half of the population lacks access to safe drinking water. The productivity of the rural population is also hindered by ill health caused by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Neglect of rural infrastructure affects the profitability of agricultural production.

Despite the fundamental contributions to the national economy, the rural areas are not attractive to live in given the general absence of basic infrastructure (potable water, roads, electricity, healthcare systems, and financial institutions, among several others) and poor quality of life occasioned by persistent poverty. Attempts at solving the rural development challenges had been the concern of the governments over the years. Several programmes such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN); the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) and the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), among others, have been utilized in developing the rural areas most especially at post-independence era. What were the contents of such programmes and how did they respond to the diverse needs and development challenges in the rural areas? The next section discusses the various versions of public infrastructural commitments to rural development in Nigeria since independence.

Post-Independence Rural Development Practice in Nigeria

Post-independence rural development strategies in Nigeria were articulated under the various national development plans namely, the first national development plan (1962-1968); second national development plan (1970-1974); the third national development plan (1975-1980); the fourth national development plan (1985-1990).

The major objective of Nigeria's first national development plan was to maintain and, if possible, to surpass the average of 4% per year of its gross domestic product at constant prices. To realize the aim, government planned a yearly investment of approximately 15% of Nigeria's gross national product. Given that agriculture is the mainstay of Nigeria's rural economy, policy attention and governmental investment in it were seen as direct and indirect avenues of developing the rural areas. Using agriculture to develop the rural areas was, therefore, at the top of Nigeria's first national development plan. According to Saheed (2010), interest in rural development owed much to a number of events which had their origin in the colonial heritage and the unanticipated oil boom of the seventies. These include massive rural-urban drift, declining productivity in agriculture, increasing food imports, growing unemployment and the widening gap in welfare terms between the urban and rural areas. Despite this policy effort at developing agriculture, and by implication the rural areas, the first development policy was more of an extended colonial policy and practice of exploitation. Abass (1993) argues that under the first national development plan period, peasant farmers were further squeezed to produce cash crops, at the expense of the subsistence crops, for export. The plan itself did not articulate any clear statement or policy on rural infrastructural development. Rather, emphasis was placed on encouraging the cultivation of agricultural produce for export purpose, without strengthening the real agricultural base of the country by providing necessary infrastructures such as good road network, electricity, agricultural processing facilities and water, among several others.

The second national development plan (1970-1974) came as a post-civil war development initiative. It was also during this plan period that Nigeria had the 'phenomenon of oil boom'. Fundamentally, the plan was aimed at: a) building a united, strong and self-reliant nation; b) building a great and dynamic economy; c) building a just and egalitarian society; d) building a land of bright and full opportunities and; e) building a free and democratic society. The plan placed high priority on reducing the level of inequality among the social classes and between urban and rural areas. One important feature of the second national development plan as observed by Marcellus (2009) was its democratic content, having emerged from a participatory process that involved stakeholders at every level of governance. Although

its primary focus was not about rural development, the plan's intention of building a just and egalitarian society suggested holistic development whereby every segment of the Nigerian space and population were to be covered. These ideals were not realized principally owing to the phenomenon of 'oil boom', which ended up undermining every efforts and commitment at mobilizing material and human resources for the achievement of the primal objective of building an egalitarian and self-reliant society. 'Oil boom' soon translated into struggle for 'oil rents' which led to massive corruption at every levels of governance. Huge spending and import of food characterized the state activity while agriculture that served as the mainstay of the economy was relegated to the background. Given the relationship of agriculture with rural development in Nigeria, government massive dependence on oil revenue during this period meant that all policies on rural development could no longer be on the agenda of government.

In the third national development plan (1975-1980), rural development was revisited based on government conviction that such investment will contribute in closing the yawning gap between the demand for food and the supply capacity of the home-based industries. Consequently, government developed interest in modernizing agriculture and introducing new initiatives to strengthen the agricultural and food base of the nation. Although the objectives of the plan looked similar to those of the second national development plan, there was a significant and radical approach as the plan emphasized the need to reduce regional disparities in order to foster national unity through the adoption of integrated rural development. Increased budgetary allocation was provided to fund diverse and interrelated rural development programmes including rural electrification scheme; the establishment of Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs); the establishment of nine River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs); the construction of small dams and boreholes for rural water supply and the clearing of feeder roads for the evacuation of agricultural produce; the supply of electricity to rural areas from large irrigation dams; commitment of resources to large scale mechanized state farming enterprises; the introduction of Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) campaign and the Green Revolution and; public efforts at land reforms through the Land Use Act of 1978.

From the first to the third national development plans, there was observable progressive budgetary improvement to enhance agricultural productivity. Olorunfemi and Adesina (1998) reported increasing financial allocation for agricultural development as follows: first national development plan had a total financial allocation of #30,835,000; second national development plan was allocated a total amount of #71,447,000; while the third national development plan had the highest allocation of #2,201,373,000 for agricultural development. Investment in rural agricultural sector is one

component that could catalyze substantive improvement in individual capabilities. However, such lopsided development interest was not enough for transforming rural areas without corresponding investment in rural infrastructures such as roads, electricity and healthcare, among several others.

The Fourth National Development Plan (1980-1985) came with several distinguishing features and potentials. First, it was formulated by a civilian government under a new constitution based on the presidential system of government. Second, it was the first plan in which the local government authorities were allowed to participate fully in rural development (FGN, 1981). The plan emphasized among other things the need for balanced development of the different sectors of the economy as well as the various geographical areas of the country. It emphasized the importance of rural infrastructural development as a vehicle for enhancing the quality of rural life. The period saw improved budgetary allocation to the eleven River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) whose functions include among other things, the construction of boreholes, dams, feeder roads and jetties. In this case the RBDAs was, to a large extent, empowered to develop the rural areas by opening up feeder roads, drilling boreholes and wells, building farm service centres and earth dams. This period saw increasing participation of all levels of governments in rural development activities especially in the areas of roads construction, healthcare services, and electricity services, water supply etc. According to Filani (1993: 250): 'the 1981-1985 national development plan marked a turning point in rural development efforts in Nigeria because it was the first to recognize the rural sector as a priority area. It made provision for integrated approach to rural development, focusing on rural infrastructure as well as institutional and administrative apparatus to facilitate rapid development of the country's agricultural potential'. The author observed that increase of 12% specific allocation to agriculture and rural development over 5% in the 1962-1968 plan represented significant political commitment to rural development practice.

The post-Fourth plan period (1986-1998) witnessed some general policies and programmes that produced massive impact in the rural areas. Key and prominent programmes and policies included the Structural Adjustment Programme¹ (SAP) and the vision 2010. The structural adjustment programme, for instance, witnessed the establishment of the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1985 for the purpose of providing rural infrastructures in the country-side. The laws establishing the Directorate was promulgated under decree number four of 1987. The core of the Directorate's programme was to promote productive activities. Besides, the Directorate recognized the provision of rural infrastructure such as

feeder roads, water, electricity and housing as essential for the enhancement of the quality of life in the rural areas.

The plan for the implementation of DFRRRI programme was organized into two phases. In phase one, the target was to provide water for 250 communities in each of the states of the federation, to construct 90,000 km of feeder roads, and to promote rural housing, health and agriculture. To facilitate industrial growth, and improve the attractiveness of the rural environment, the Directorate planned to commence its rural electrification programme in the second phase starting in June 1987. In pursuit of its objectives, DFRRRI also planned to co-operate with organizations like Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute (NBRRI) as well as Rural Water Supply and Sanitation programme (RUWATSAN). The Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) was not to be involved in direct implementation of the programmes. Rather, for the purpose of the programme implementation, the Directorate used as its main agents, the states and the local governments, to execute its programmes. The funds for the programme of the Directorate were made available directly to each state government who then saw to its disbursement to the local governments. The local governments in the federation were constituted into rural development committees. These committees comprised of the local government officials and the rural communities. The Vision 2010 was framed under the then General Sani Abacha. The Vision 2010 Committee made large scale recommendations for rural transformation. The recommendations emphasized on massive rural infrastructural intervention on the one hand, and agricultural transformation on the other hand (Vision 2010, 1997). Under the rural infrastructural development, the framework of the RBDAs were to be used in building small and large scale dams, irrigation channels, boreholes, dykes, flood and erosion projects, among others. The policy orientation was laid out in the National Rolling Plan (1996-1998, vol. 1). According to Mustapha and Meagher (2000), other important agencies such as Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) and Federal Department of Agriculture (FDA) were to be utilized to develop hectares of farmlands, produce tonnes of seedlings and rehabilitate rural roads, among several others. The Vision 2010 could not survive following the death of the then General Sani Abacha. On the whole, this period witnessed radical and more holistic intentions towards the development of rural areas.

Subsequent efforts at rural development came in the light of Nigeria's democratic experiment (1999-to date). A four-year development plan was initially articulated (1999-2003) with the objective of pursuing a strong, virile and broad-based economy that is highly competitive, responsive to incentives, private sector-led, diversified, market-oriented and open, but based on

internal momentum for its growth (Marcellus, 2009 and Donli, 2004). Emphasis on private sector-led growth did not carry sufficient message for rural development. As the prospect of achieving the intended objective of the plan did not materialize, a re-think was therefore necessary. When the ruling party (the People's Democratic Party-PDP) got re-elected in 2003, they came up with a new programme namely, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS: 2003-2007). NEEDS was quite comprehensive and ambitious, as it was not only duplicated at all levels of governments (State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy-SEEDS; and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy-LEEDS), it incorporated the private sector, non-governmental organization and the general public in pursuits of its developmental goals. As a framework for poverty reduction and for the stimulation of economic growth, NEEDS' key objective was to facilitate a broad-based market oriented economy that will involve active participation of the private sector, with the main source of economic empowerment coming from the generation of gainful employment opportunities as well as the provision of social safety nets for vulnerable groups. By attempting to empower the rural populace, NEEDS had a substantive vision of eliminating rural poverty and promoting the development of the rural space. Given a run-down of the various rural development plans in Nigeria, the next section attempts a comparative analysis of rural development practices under the military and civilian rule regimes as a way of gaining better insights on approaches, best practices and impacts.

3. Military Context and Civilian Democracy in Rural Development Practice: A Comparison

Rural development practice at post-independence Nigeria has been influenced by two broad regime episodes namely, the military system and civilian democracy. What were the major characteristics and approaches and what form of impacts were produced?

The first (1962-1968), second (1970-1974), third (1975-1980), fourth (1980-1985), post-fourth (1986-1998) development plans were all framed and implemented by the military. The military has ruled Nigeria from 1966 to 1999, with a brief interlude between 1979 and 1982. The brief democratic interlude had no clear development plan for rural Nigeria. Post-military rule beginning from 1999 came with a number of development documents namely, the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP, 1999-2000); National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2003-2007). Under the military system, rural development practices were mostly conceptualized around

agricultural development clearly envisaged in the number of 'development plan specific agricultural programmes' such as increased investment of about 15% of the country's gross domestic product in the agricultural sector (1962-1968); River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and land use reforms (1975-1980 plan period). Improved conceptualization of rural development came under the military directed fourth national development plan (1980-1985) whereby rural agricultural development was planned alongside the provision of essential rural infrastructures such as feeder roads, boreholes, dams. This is when the idea of using the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) for integrated development of the rural areas received high policy priority. The RBDAs concept was followed by the post-fourth development plan (1986-1998) which brought some radical approaches to rural development through the agency of the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFPRI).

While the military system gradually progressed from agriculturally centred conceptualization of rural development, the democratic governments beginning from 1999 conceptualized rural development around economic empowerment of the rural populace. This can be seen in the light of the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) with state and local parallels. Interestingly, agricultural development has been de-emphasized while youth employment, rural infrastructures and the development and conservation of natural resources took the centre stage of policy governance, at least on paper. Based on some studies and reports, rural development practice under this period has not been significantly different from previous public programmes in terms of political commitment and implementation practices. These have consistently led to poor results. For instance, Bambale (2011) reported that NEEDS failed as an empowerment programme in eliminating poverty and improving the basic infrastructures with direct link to poverty reduction in the rural areas. This was statistically substantiated by the UN Human Development Index report which showed an increase in poverty in Nigeria from 34.0 percent to 38.8 percent during the periods of NEEDS (UNDP, 2009). Marcellus (2009) specifically observed that while Nigeria's wealth rose within the period of NEEDS owing to better petroleum oil prices and substantial debt relief by Paris club, the average Nigerian especially in the rural areas remained disproportionately very poor quite contrary to some official figures from the Central Bank of Nigeria (the author cited CBN, 2005: 76). On the other hand, Osagie (2007:29) saw poor leadership and a lack of proper coordination as responsible for failed public programmes (as in NEEDS). As a neo-liberal oriented development strategy, NEEDS could not have been the appropriate development strategy for a

country whose citizens are still struggling for some basic infrastructures which the State alone can provide.

How focused and feasible were the various development plans in Nigeria could best be evaluated by looking at the respective plan scope and target output. One key problem that confronted national development plans under the military rule had much to do with the challenge of regime stability and continuity. Regime instability always rendered rural development plans and policies short-lived and replaced by subsequent ones as a result of regime change. While this specific problem applied to the military system, the practice of democratic governance has not built on the lessons of the past as most rural development programmes seemed more associated with particular regimes and would soon disappear with regime change. Rural development initiatives often carry excessive politicization while their survival most often depends on regime longevity. Taking example of Vision 2010 of the Sani Abacha regime, Aluko (2006) observed that in spite of the best ideas and intentions encapsulated in the reform agenda, the subsequent regime led by Olusegun Obasanjo terminated the plan because of sheer hatred for Abacha. He went on to observe that Obasanjo's tenure elongation programme was explicitly premised on guaranteeing the survival of his vision 2020 plan.

Most rural development plans under the military seemed better focused in terms of contents and implementation practices. Emphasis on agriculture was important entry point given its importance in guaranteeing food security, sustaining massive employment opportunities, contributing to foreign exchange earnings, and as a framework for the development of other physical and social infrastructures in the rural areas. Abba and others (cited in Abdu and Marshall, 1990) had noted the role of agriculture as Nigeria's main industry as far as employment was concern with over 65% of the population being dependent on it for livelihood. As early as 1964, Liman (cited in Abdu and Marshall, 1990) had reported a 70% of GDP contribution from the agricultural sector to Nigerian economy.

Under the military era, numerous agriculturally based programmes including the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution and Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) carried some useful impact on economic, social and physical infrastructures. The River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) of 1976, and further amended in 1987 and the Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) established in 1985 represented progressive improvements in rural development under the military system. DFRRI for instance, was set up to pursue the following programmes:

- the organization and mobilization of the local people to enhance or facilitate closer interaction between the government and the people. In addition the local communities were asked to form unions or associations for the purpose of providing common facilities for themselves;
- the provision of rural infrastructures such as rural feeder roads, rural water and sanitation, rural housing and electrification;
- the promotion of productive activities such as food and agriculture, rural industrialization and technology;
- the promotion of other extracurricular activities such as socio-cultural and recreational programmes, intra and inter community cohesion activities.

Other complementary agencies include the establishment of the National Directorate for Employment (NDE), Better Life Programme for rural women/dwellers, peoples'/community banks and the Directorate of Mass Mobilization for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER). According to Filani (1993), by the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was some improvement in the conception of what constituted rural development. In this case, rural development at policy and practice levels was conceived in a way that transcended mere agricultural development to incorporate the development and expansion of rural infrastructures, emphasize on poverty alleviation and socio-economic empowerment of the rural inhabitants. The concept of integrated river basin development was, therefore, strengthened as a way of using the resources of the river basin for the comprehensive development of the basin areas. In essence, it can be argued that rural development practice under the military had clearly outlined agenda as opposed to the civilian regimes whose programmes were bereft of well-articulated and focused plans for rural development.

Citizenship participation and input in any policy formulation and implementation processes is very crucial since the outcome of such arrangements is bound up with popular views and inputs. This is the most important element of a democratic system as opposed to dictatorial arrangements. Every development plan in Nigeria beginning from post-independence revolves around an individual or a group of individuals in governments and public offices. The normal top-down communications were the dominant practice under the military where the federal government passes its development packages to states and local governments for implementation at the local levels. The River Basin Development Authority initiated and consolidated by the military and inherited by the civilian governments, still retain its uniform mandate and objectives of rural development in total disregard of the huge environmental, socio-economic and physical diversities of the various regions of Nigeria. Akpabio (2010), in this

particular case of the River Basin Development Authorities, had argued that most public policies and programmes in Nigeria hardly succeed because of utter disregard for local socio-ecological circumstances of operation. This argument applies to all other agricultural and rural development policies and programmes under the military regime except the second development plan (1970-1974). The uniqueness and participatory character of the second development plan could be appreciated against the backdrop of the circumstances of the post-civil war where the need for rehabilitation, and building a united and egalitarian society necessitated interest and subsequent engagement of relevant stakeholders. Such context of participatory governance and development soon could not be sustained given subsequent military intervention. In this case, all other subsequent development plans claimed participation, though falsely, at inter-governmental levels, which in reality amounted to mere directives and communication of what to implement at the state and local government levels.

Fundamentally, the emergence of democratic governance beginning from 1999 was to offer the best opportunity for participatory rural development at every level. For one, the constitution of Nigeria guarantees, in principle, some levels of autonomy to state and local authorities. Second, the power of democratic election and political informational debates offer remarkable political incentives of participatory development at every levels of governance. However, these standards have not yet been internalized in the Nigerian political space. Every known rural development programme beginning from 1999 hardly reflect the true perspectives of the diverse stakeholders and voices. Rural development programmes and policies are still driven by individuals and select few in public offices as was common practice during military dictatorship. This equally accounts for why rural development programmes hardly outlive regime change. Much could be blamed on the nature of Nigeria's institutional arrangements. The military were not able to create enabling institutional environment for participatory governance given that power revolved around individuals and groups within the military hierarchy. When Nigeria started experiencing democratic governance, the needed institutional foundation for democratic and participatory governance was already not nurtured. The implication is that individuals and leaders still cultivate enormous power and influence over the machinery of government, to the extent that corruption, nepotism and poor leadership have combined not only to corrupt public development processes, but also serve to inhibit the proper functioning of public policies and plans that are meant for rural development.

4. Summary and Concluding Remarks

Rural development efforts in Nigeria have not been successful in general. The reasons for this could be located in wider contexts of long years of military intervention, poor understanding and synchronization of development plans with local realities, absence of effective development planning institutional capacity, and the problem of institutionalized corruption, among others.

Clearly, rural development practice in Nigeria has, for the past five decades, been driven by the military government. During the more than 33 years of military intervention, various regime-specific development plans were utilized with short-lived implementation span occasioned by frequent regime change. Rural development programmes came and went with regime change. Agricultural development dominated almost all the rural development documents and practices under the military until the late 1980s when attention started focusing on other aspects of social, physical and economic infrastructures. This was possible within the framework of River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) and the Directorate for Food, Roads and rural Infrastructures (DFRFI). The evolution of rural development practice from agricultural to a much broader outlook in the 1980s was understandable from the background of Nigeria's colonial experience which imposed some learning necessities on the post-colonial military rulers. The colonial exploitative relations with local resources still dominated the mindset of the post-colonial leaders to the extent that rural areas were seen from the perspectives of serving the ends of not only supplying basic food needs of the urban areas but contributing to foreign exchange earnings through basic raw material exports. Consequently, infrastructural development for the rural areas was mostly based on critical elements that only could enhance the goal of food and raw materials production. Unending exploitation replaced the real needs for socio-economic and infrastructural developments in the rural areas. The late 1980s witnessed improved governmental commitment to rural development when integrated and holistic approaches were utilized. In summary, the period before the late 1980s could be said to represent the learning period for the emerging military rulers after the country's independence. However, frequent military intervention made it impossible for such learning phase to be strengthened. This probably contributed to why rural development could not practically be detached from agricultural exploitation. Given the lack of professional understanding and skills in political governance, one could hardly expect much profound and better approach to rural development under the military system.

If the military had not done much in transforming the rural areas, the emergence of democratic governance beginning from 1999 would serve to

correct whatever deficiencies that were related to the military system of rural development. However, this seems not to be the case as rural development policies and practices still have the imprint of short-lived, insular and fragmented programmes, which come and disappear with a specific regime. While this problem has been explained in relation to weak institutional arrangements, the phenomenon of corruption among public officials and elite groups often ensures that important public policy and rural development agenda of governments do not get directly to the intended beneficiaries by way of unduly influencing project distribution, kickbacks, ethnic and patronage politics, contract inflation and poor job execution. Although rural development practice in Nigeria have been recognized at various institutional levels (Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development, Water Resources, etc.), absence of proper coordination has resulted in many challenges of inefficiency and inter-agency competition. Many of the agencies directly or indirectly in charge of rural development choose to pursue disparate and politically-motivated interests manifesting in a waste of public resources and funds on parallel and most often unrelated projects. Absence of strict and focused institutional arrangements also explains why rural development policies and plans rarely survive regime change as discussions in the paper have clearly illustrated. These problems can only be addressed with strong and well-coordinated institutional arrangements at various levels of governance, in addition to professional and participatory engagements in rural project plan initiatives and implementation practices. Hopes of addressing these problems under the present democratic environment are already not very encouraging as most of the rural development practices under the democratic governance hardly have clear focus. Some plans carry many ambitious and overlapping objectives while actual implementation is often, in most cases, not related to local needs and realities. Politicization of development benefits and absence of professionalism in planning and implementation have conspired to render most rural development plans very ineffective most especially during the present democratic experiment.

Although some of the rural development plans of economic empowerment and poverty alleviation embodied in the post-military rural development approach are useful for the improvement of standard of living of the rural populace, the paper argues that policies and programmes should be targeted more at expanding social opportunities of the rural populace through massive public investment in education, healthcare, social security and physical infrastructures. Taking this approach will not only contribute in improving the quality of life of the rural populace, it will be helpful in expanding their basic capabilities for development

Notes

- ¹ The structural adjustment programme which was conceived to stimulate domestic production processes carried the following objectives: a) to restructure and diversify the productive base of the economy in order to reduce dependency on the oil sector and on imports; b) to achieve fiscal and balance of payments viability over the period; c) to lay the basis for a sustainable non-inflationary growth; d) to reduce the dominance of unproductive investment in the public sector, improve that sector's efficiency and enhance the growth and potential of the private sector (Phillips, 1987). The key policies designed to achieve these objectives were: i) strengthening of the hitherto strong and relevant demand management policies; ii) adoption of measures to stimulate domestic production and broaden the supply base of the economy; c) the setting up of a second-tier foreign exchange market (SFEM), as a mechanism of realistic exchange rate and consequently, the alteration of relative prices to enhance efficiency in resource allocation, and to promote domestic-based production and non-oil exports; d) further rationalization and restructuring of tariffs in order to aid industrial diversification; e) the liberalization of the external trade and payments system-dismantling of price, trade and exchange controls; f) the elimination of price controls and commodity boards; g) the decontrol of interest rates; and h) the rationalization and restructuring of public sector enterprises and overhauling of the public sector administrative structure.

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