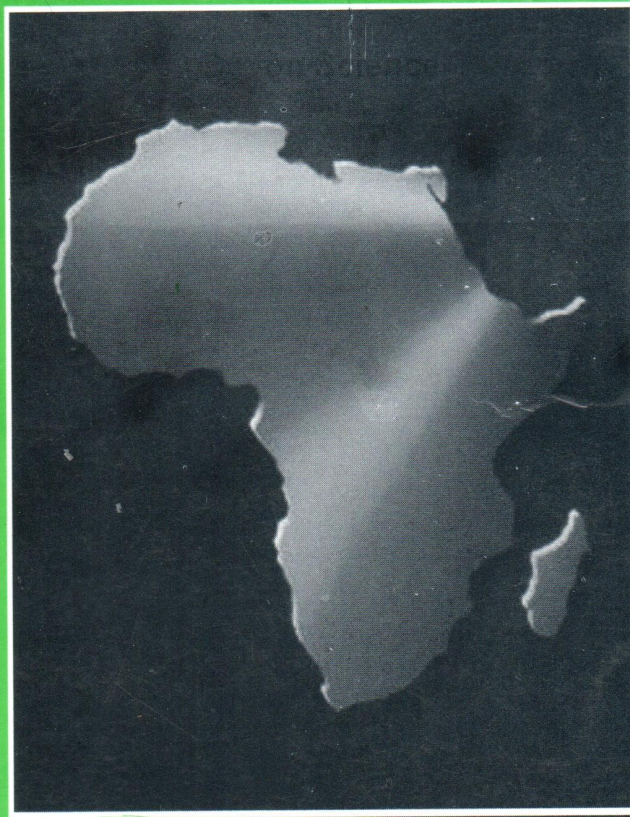


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## THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH AND THE NEED FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*A critical overview of Past Rural Development Strategies in Nigeria show that they were and are still bedeviled with numerous defects. Strategies and approaches such as the Sectoral Approach, the Structural Approach, and the Integrated Rural Development Approach, in combination with the various National Development Plans of the Country have not reduced the gap between the urban elites and the rural poor. Against this background, it seems clear that something concrete has been left out in the course of rural development which must be investigated and incorporated with the existing approaches. This study therefore suggests the development of an alternative strategy here-in refers to as the Humanistic Approach (HA). The focus here is that, human consciousness must be enhanced and incorporated into the development goals of the people in order to meet the challenges of rural development in Nigeria.*

**Key Words:** Sustainable Rural Development; Poverty Alleviation; Humanistic Approach

### INTRODUCTION

To talk about development is similar as talking about the older concept of either advancement or progress. As noted by Ering (2002), in recent years, there have been some efforts to give the concept greater precision. It is an established fact that a society may change in a number of ways. Candidly; it may become relatively peaceful, more authoritarian, or even poorer and less authoritarian (see Asante, 1991 and Kalu, 1987). Development in general, and Rural Development in particular can be favourably argued to mean a kind of social change during which the well-being and income of the people markedly increase. Scholarly, some have argued that not only must wealth be made available to people but such increases in wealth must be reflected in the average incomes of the families and persons within the society. On the other hand, there abound an argument that apart from societal wealth being given to collective projects, defense and ceremonial activities such as 'FESTAC 77' and Nigeria '99', social change as a true development must include some liberalization of the political and ideological structures of the society (Dube, 1988 and Luke, 1985).

The existing divisive approach, however, has its limitation reminiscent of the old story of the blind men describing the elephant. The one who touches the trunk thinks it is like a snake and the one who touches the leg, thinks it is like a tree. Development, like the blind people who described the elephant, lack consensus on the nature of their description. In abstract sense, a perusal of the literature on the underdeveloped societies disclose certain consistency in the description of development. This takes us to the characteristics used in identifying developing societies such as Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Liberia, etc. In the 80s, subsequent administration established various agencies to oversee the implementation of government development policies at the rural level. According to Abasiokong (1982), Developing Countries (including Nigeria) now more than ever come to be convinced that, in order to ensure the overall development of their countries, the rural areas must be transformed and brought into the mainstream of their countries development structure." Indeed, it was the realization of this fact that, Integrated Rural Development (I.R.D) as a programme started to gain prominence that policies and programmes aimed at the improvement of rural areas and the entire country for that matter were announced and pursued by governmental agencies at various levels, (Federal, States, Local Communities) particularly since independence. (Also see Bridges, 1974; Asukao, 1989, Ekong, et al. 1982 and Heberlein, 1976).

According to Ajachu (1976:64) the rural populations have reacted in various ways, while the policies and the people's reactions have also had considerable locational and spatial implications for rural development landscape. Such bold steps have not recorded much success in solving problems of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in the rural Nigeria, nor have the policies and efforts of government at

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various levels been able to stem the tide of rural urban drift. On the above note, this paper therefore examines why Nigeria's rural development strategies since independence has not improved the situation of the rural poor in the country. The paper takes a critical look at major RD Strategies, approaches and theories so far undertaken by Nigerian government in order to change the rural landscape, and what has been their practicability and effects in terms of social change and improvement in the well being of the Rural Peoples. However, the focus of the present study is that considering the short comings of past strategies and approaches, an alternative approach – the 'Humanistic Alternative' may obviously provide the missing links that other strategies failed to achieve. The humanistic approach is a paradigm shift involving the application of human consciousness to effect development goals on a target society (Also see Idaresit, 2007).

### **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The major methodological orientation that is adopted in this paper in addition to the library research is the participant observation method. Here, critical examination of policy documents, theoretical models and government programmes at all levels were carried out. Government policies and programmes so far initiated and implemented since independence from 1960 till date were carefully studied and analyzed against the backdrop of improving the rural situation in terms of development. The state Department of RD provided additional information for this work. Twenty Five RD Schemes were visited for first hand information and on-the-spot assessments. Four trained Field Assistants were employed for data collection through questionnaire and interview. The study was conducted between January and May, 2009 in Akwa Ibom State, South South Nigeria.

### **THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE**

Nigeria, by far is the most populous country in all of Black Africa, estimated at about 140 million people (NPC 1976). As noted by Uya (1992), Nigeria is located on the Guinea coast of West Africa, between latitudes 4° and 14°N and longitude 3° and 14° East. It is bounded by the Republics of Niger and Chad to the North, Benin Republic to the West, Cameroon Republic to the East and the Atlantic coast to the South. Nigeria's land of about 924,000 sq.km lies fully within the tropics and is well classified by geographers into two broad zones, that is, the tropical rain forest starting from the Atlantic coast through the sandy beaches of fresh water swamps up to latitude 9° North and the savannah zone of grasslands merging with the sahel region at the Niger Republic boundary. Besides this lofty geographical magnificence, the geographic space, both physical and human, has had great impact on the development of the country. Indeed, despite the vastness, a considerable huge demographic mass are properly trained, orientated and equipped with adequate technological and administrative know-how, which provides human resources for the proper control of her geographic space by generating reasonably, high internal demand indispensable for self-control and self sustained growth. This makes Nigerian to be widely acclaimed as one of the most generously endowed countries in Africa, both physically and humanly. (Sandary, 1978; Karina, 1982; Idobe, 1989 and Ihejimaizu, 2002).

In terms of its people, the country is regarded as an ethnic mosaic, with no less than clearly identifiable 250 ethnic groups (Oluwabamide, 2003). The existence of the ethnic groups as argued by Uya (1992) is not to subscribe to the myth among social scientist and especially among the Eurocentric scholars that, all problems of nation building in Africa nay Nigeria can be traced to this 'tribal' or 'ethnic' factor. Contrary to this myth, the sense of ethnic exclusiveness and incapability so prevalent in Africa today was a deliberate function of the antics and conscience of the administrative policies of European colonialists as part of their strategy to 'divide and rule' over the Africans. (Ake, 1981; Alapiki, 1991 and Ayodele, 2001). By this experience, the people became disorganized, frustrated and disarticulated, having been rubbed-off of their tradition and indigenous development strategies.

It is also pertinent to note that, the people of present day Nigeria evolved their political and social structures from their various communities. But Nigeria started having problems when the stateless societies were forced under a common administration because most of these hitherto dispersed groups existed without identifiable chiefs and rulers, and so their egalitarian principles of governance were responsible for these problems, which have remained till date. However, what can be pointed out from the above is the fact that, the peoples have, overtime, been subjected to enormous pressures both from within and without in their effort to develop their land. In line with the above, the present studies therefore attempt to build a bridge by which past and present development strategies could be merged in order to develop a new and practicable strategy for rural development.

## DEVELOPMENT: AN OVERVIEW

The issue of development occupies an important position in the minds of scholars, policy makers and developmentalists most especially as it affects Third World Societies in general and rural areas in particular. This has been responsible for the diverse scholarly debates on what development is and what is not. According to Ering (200:109), in spite of the several definitions, the meaning of development has evolved from its narrow conceptualization from economic indicator of GNP to a more broad-based conceptualization as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions. It is also seen as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty among the people. (Udoh, 2001; Okon, 2006 and Ekpenyong, 2007).

Historically, the concept of development as noted above, was measured by economic growth, that is why some early economists used economic parameters to measure development. Prominently as noted by Akpakpan (1988), Adam Smith, a Scottish scholar generally regarded as the father of modern economics argued in 1776 that, what promoted the wealth of the nation, which is today regarded as economic or development was the pursuit of private interests by private individuals and/or groups of private individuals. Accordingly, these people were in business not because they were really in love with the society, but because they expected private gains from such activities. The pursuance of these private gains produced an invisible hand that accelerated action to promote the interest of the society as a whole. By extension, this serves as the foundation for capitalism, which represents one of the duo ways of defining development. As a counter position, Karl Marx, a German scholar came up with an idea of socialism where he advocated for public ownership of means of production as well as central planning of investments that would usher in development (Hubsbawn, 1977).

One may now ask, what is development? According to Agabi (1999), "Development must be re-defined as an attack on the chief evils of the world today; malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, slums, unemployment and inequality, measured in terms of aggregate growth rates". But measured in terms of jobs, justice and elimination of poverty, it has been a failure or only a partial success. From this point of view, one can unequivocally ascertain that, economy can grow without development taking place mostly when poverty, malnutrition, etc. are still very much around in the land. According to the UNs, development is seen from the point of view of man who is the central phenomenon in the whole process. As noted by Edeke (2002) the development of man should be studied in connection with the means of fulfilling his needs and with changes in the environment he belongs. Also worthy of note is the radical position of Rodney (1972), who sees development as "a multi-sided phenomenon. At the level of individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being". This means that development goes beyond economic indicators.

Following from the above, Seers (1989:3) argues that "The question to ask about a country's development are therefore to understand what has been happening to poverty, what has been happening to unemployment and what has been happening to inequality. If all three of these problems have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, there has been a period of development for the country concerned". If one or two of these central problems has not been solved, especially, if all the three are present, it would be strange to refer to the country as developed even if per-capita income doubles. By this, we can say that development means seeking for better life with an improved living condition of the individuals or group of individuals. For development to take place as noted by Ering (2000), such a country must experience a shift from traditionalism to a modern way of production, otherwise referred to as industrialization. It is important to also note that, development of any society to a large extent is a function of availability of "resources". These resources are both materials and human. As noted already, Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and material resources. If we are blessed with all the above factors, why are we then still languishing in poverty and malnutrition? Why are we still importing almost all our electronics, motor cars, building materials, and so on? The haunch behind the study is that, we are not following the right path for development or rather we are not adopting the appropriate strategy for development. In spite of all the strategies and programmes set up by various administrations, the country's development is still several miles away from us, meaning that, those strategies do not really solved the problems of underdevelopment and poverty especially among rural people. In the light of the above, the study proceeds to discussing the various Rural Development strategies since independence in 1960 and beyond.



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### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES SINCE INDEPENDENCE: THE NIGERIA'S EXPERIENCE**

Efforts at developing Nigeria's rural societies have been pursued since the colonial times. The concern then has been to transform those societies in order to reach a common set of development goals based on capacities and needs of the people (Ering 2000). There have been policies aimed at the improvement of the country since 1960. As noted by Ebong (1991), Nigeria's rural societies, ever before the advent of colonization, have been indulging in various forms of community self-help schemes such as construction of village roads, shrines, village squares, markets and a host of other activities. Indeed, one can say that Nigeria's development efforts and programmes have been part of Nigeria's cultural heritage. As further noted by other scholar such as Mabogunje (1980), Nwaka (2002), and Sattaur (2004), the institutionalization of modern rural development schemes can be traced to the 1920s when the British Colonial Office adopted strategy of community development as a special development model for rural areas of all colonies. Some community development centers were established to supplement the short comings of the traditional British School System where people were taught on skill acquisition such as; shoe repairing, carpentry, houses building etc.

After the political independence in 1960, the federal and regional governments vigorously pursued conscious and deliberate policies of transforming the countrys' rural arrears. The early stage of this development according to Ibe (1999) is that, the nation got involved in development planning in order to catch up with the developed nations. According the Buffins and Enos (1970), the document which receives a favourable attention from the public, is the development plan. This is because, it specifies the government goals and resources as well as its policies and objectives. The first Post-Independence Development Plan (1962-1968) was fashioned by Nigerians themselves hence, it reflected the Nigerian's outlook. The federal and regional governments vigorously pursued conscious and deliberate policies of transforming rural areas. The governments then were preoccupied with the establishment of Farm Settlement Schemes. This policy thrust as noted by Ering (2000), gave rise to the various farm plantations spread across various states of the federation. This policy had the prime objective of preventing the mass movement of youths from villages to the urban areas. This however failed because the programmes were largely incoherent and uncoordinated, and also due to the outbreak of the civil war in 1967. Since the war was not envisaged during the planning period, the resources meant for development were diverted to finance the war. During this period, allocation and control of developmental resources was placed under capital budgeting. As the country opened up to industrialization in 1976, there was accelerated development strategy, this time, it was the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). This was a major rural development policy of Murtala/Obasanjo governments. As noted by Nzimiro (1985), the concern at this time was to bring down the prices of food items and arrest the rate of food importation. Unfortunately, it turned out to produce more emergency millionaires at the expenses of rural farmers and rural development.

The second National Development Plan which was launched immediately after the war in 1970, was to cover 1970-1974 within the major policy thrust of Reconstruction, Reformation and Rehabilitation (R<sup>3</sup>) initiated by General Gowon. According to Usoro (1998), this planning was directed towards replacing the war-damaged infrastructures, it was radical and revolutionary. In the Third Development Plan covered 5-year period of April 1975 to March 1980, the major objectives centered on income distribution, reduction of level of unemployment, and balanced development.

Another policy was that initiated by Obasanjo Military regime in 1978. Though succeeding governments continued with this policy option with all amount of determination to change the fortunes of rural areas and the entire country, Ejue (1998) states that, this policy tended to make rural dwellers to recede deeper into walloping poverty. This policy witnessed another failure and waste of huge amount of financial resources put into the programme. In 1980, the civilian regime of Shahu Shagari launched the Green Revolution with a set objective geared towards improving agricultural productivity. The programme rather turned out to be a revolution for the rich instead of addressing the problems of the poor. These programmes by implication, were functional on "paper" level, but failed in actual application. In 1985, the Babangida administration launched the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI). This was channeled towards Integrated Rural Development (IRD). This contained a comprehensive strategy and co-ordinated approach of all stakeholders (persons and agencies) concerned, with the sole aim of involving rural people in determining policies, planning and implementing programmes that are designed to improve their economic, social, and cultural conditions and also to enable them to make positive contributions to national development. The hopes of the rural people were raised as the Directorate opened up rural feeder roads and

provided other infrastructures. Unfortunately, this programme collapsed due to lack of continuity. To Ejue (1998), it died a natural death.

The fact that women are active participant in the development strategies and that they occupy more than half of the world's human resources and central to the economic and social being of societies makes development incomplete without them. In 1986, Mrs. Mariam Babangida introduced the Better Life for Rural Women". The primary aim was to bring succour to the poor rural women, who have through their petty activities sustained the economy. The name was latter changed to "Family Support Programme" by Mariam Abacha during General Sanni Abacha's administration. Despite huge financial resources that was pumped into the programme, it turned out to be a monumental failure. The rural arrears of the country were compelled to be integrated while the programme served the purposes of the rich urban women, as such, the purpose was robbed of it focus and therefore became "Better life for Urban Women".

The Obasanjo in 1999 put in place a major policy programme aimed at alleviating the poverty level in the society through the "National Poverty Alleviation Programme (NAPAP)." The administration's policy thrust was to eradicate poverty, unemployment and inequality or bring it to the barest minimum. According to Ering (2000), if doggedly and genuinely pursued, the programme could have changed the fortunes of rural poors in particular and Nigerians in general. Unfortunately, the ongoing reforms and the celebrated policy thrust of NAPAP has started showing emerging indications from different states of the federation which have given a great cause for concern. As was the case with similar programmes, people are beginning to make millions out of it and there is a likelihood that it will turn out to be business as usual. (Also see Nweze, 1988, Nkwocha, 1990; Nnabue, 1990 and Olisa, et al. 1992).

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES: A REVIEW

The deliberate attempt to review the rural development strategies from 1960 till date is to ascertain their effectiveness or otherwise in changing lives and well-being of rural dwellers. We shall therefore briefly consider and distinguished four main theoretical approaches. These will be examined against the backdrop of the various strategies, that is, their suitability and ability in causing things to happen positively. These include:

- (i) *Sectoral Approach*: This is one of the oldest and most popular approach that has continued to be used all over the world. This involves annual budgets and plans drawn up in sectoral terms on the basis of ministerial and departmental reports and projects. The designers of these policies, programmes and strategies assigned functions to the sectors. The sectoral approach entails a comprehensive plan broken down into workable timetable. They have set targets with financial provisions made or expected to be made based on schedules. The sectors covered by the plan are agriculture, industry, transport, education, health services and administrative sectors, (Ntukidem 1991).

The sectoral approach has consciously or unconsciously enjoyed Nigeria's patronages since independence as a strategy for development. Provisions were made in both budgets and development plans, and inbuilt provisions were also made for material and human resources development. All budgets and development plans as already examined were well intentioned. As noted by Karina (1982), the distance between policy and practice as experienced in Nigeria is great, but has never been implemented. Instead, budgetary allocations made have gone along way in enlarging the pockets of individuals. Development plans suffered defeat mostly in the hands of the military dictators who at several times truncate plans through coups and counter-coups. Funds for projects were also diverted to conducting of fraudulent elections. Annual budgets also share in the shame of mismanagement as funds for a given sectoral development were often times, diverted or not used at all. In this wise, developments in this sector suffers. Indeed, the negative aspects of this sectoral arrangement seems to ignore the benefits which include, enabling the government and the people to know the growth and weakness in a given sector of the economy. It helps to underline the contributions of various sectors to the economy in terms of sustainable development.

- (ii) *The Structural Approach*: This concerns with the transformation of the major institutions and structures of the society. Scholars have argued that, if these structures are transformed in line with modern or western democratic ideals, the society will definitely develop. While the efforts at rural areas simply means improving the existing structures and institutions to meet the needs of the people and help create wealth for better living, the approach also concerns the restructuring of the family, that is, creating an enabling society where feminism works, in order to place women at an advantage positions so as to contribute their quota to the societal general development. A Good example of this was the Better Life Programme aimed at creating



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enabling possibilities for women to have access to credit facilities and others assistance. As already noted, this dream was high-jacked by wives of privileged few in urban centers.

(iii) *Integrated Rural Development Approach*: This approach is new in the minds of government in tackling the problems of rural poor. This was made possible due primarily to the fact that, previous efforts did little or nothing to improve the living standard of the people, which remains the distinct goal of development. Despite the celebrated strategies, food production was still very low and its percapita income, low, while unemployment, poverty and illiteracy takes the front row. Besides the backdrop of economic growth and technology, the strategy lay emphasis on the fact that the economic base in the rural areas can only make meaning when utilizing both human and material resources by providing essential services, employment, closure of link between agriculture, as well as improving the level of industrial and service sectors in rural areas. This embraces an overall policy conducive to achieving social improvements of the rural masses. Take for instance the DFRRI introduced by Babangida's administration, the approach on infrastructures gave the rural poor a sigh of relief but the programme riddled off and not until the introduction of NAPAP by Obasanjo's administration, there was no replacement. Assessing all the above approaches rationally, it can be said that they provided lofty goals for rural development. The question now is, why do these approaches failed to get the rural societies developed. The simplest answer to the question is that something fundamental was lacking which called for a paradigm shift level-in referred to as the Humanistic Approach.

(iv) *The Humanistic Approach and the need for a paradigm shift*: The humanistic approach represents a pure educational programme which has to do with awakening of consciousness and empowerment of the people. Ntukidem (1991) notes that, the approach entails the improvement of society's capacity to understand, manage and control its environment: The approach seeks to improve individuals and group's consciousness towards meaningful co-operation with other human groups for the good of all. The approach is to change peoples attitudes, perception and their behaviour, to make development possible. It is argued that only one type of self-consciousness that the humanistic approach generates can bring about self-emancipation and makes the rural people exert sufficient control over an environment that appear to them as even and unchangeable (Ering 2000). Experts have argue that, any successful development programme must enjoy proper/adequate education of the people in order to positively change their attitudes toward programmes or projects initiated by government. To this end, the humanistic kind of education advocated here is to create a consciousness to the realization of the fact that cities or urban centres are not different from the rural areas due to the presence of the bright lights, the tared streets, the high concentration of people, opportunities, activities, beliefs and out look towards life. This represents the type of development that enables us to see other people and the world as a community of human individuals capable of contributing their best to the societal development at all times, and that our rural communities could also be like the urban if those facilities are provided. (Also see Okereke, 1999; Whethen, 1996 and Udoh, 2010).

In Nigeria, a reasonable number of government policies exist which fall under this approach. We had War Against Indiscipline (WAI) in 1984, Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reliance (MAMSER) in 1987, National Orientation Movement (NOM) in 1986, National Orientation Agency (NOA), currently, we have National Rebirth Campaign in 1999, which are all in the business of changing attitudes and behaviours positively, thereby setting the pace for meaningful and sustainable development. MAMSER as an appendix of DFRRI was indeed a very sound edu-attitudinal programme but such a beautiful programme was allowed to be destroyed at a wave of hand through men, in ordinate quest for wealth, at the expense of societal development. There abounds a great need to get out of the doldrums and help position the society on the development pathway.

The fact that governments have initiated programmes at different spheres of administration, and an examination of the various policies and programmes show that they have failed to address the issues of poverty, underemployment and inequality signify that something is wrong fundamentally with these strategies that called for change. The peasants whose reason the strategies were put in place were not able to really dance to the lovely tunes of the empowerment programme, instead, the elites who were at the implementation position high-jacked the whole programme. They used the funds meant for projects to form new clans of elite club by way of self-awarded contract and outright embezzlement of funds. Currently,

scholars through various researches have come to conclude that, any programme(s) and or policy that is meant for people must involve them at all stages of the project or programme, that is, from conception to implementation and actual evaluation. The Humanistic Approach to rural development is therefore viewed along this line and is being considered as one of the most useful ideas because it appeals to human consciousness. The previous attempts have shown abuse of mass mobilization instruments used in educating and mobilizing the people, mostly the rural poor. In this regard, even the Heads of government should be more pragmatic in their administration, while the citizens should learn to live above vandalization and unethical attitude towards government policies and programmes. The humanistic approach means putting a round peg in a round hole for the benefit of all.

The conceptualization, planned and execution or implementation of previous development efforts has been faulted because something fundamental was wrong. Having experienced failures in the previous development strategies over the years as is noted earlier in this study, we therefore wish to consider an alternative strategy, a new approach or paradigm shift that could transform the rural poor nay the whole country. To this end, we shall consider a "double-barrel" approach to development. By this I mean the combination of two methodologies and strategies "Participatory Rural Appraisal and Concretization". By Participatory Rural Appraisal, it means putting the downtrodden first, that is, "putting the last first". This is regarded as a professional revolution that espouses 'people's participation' and seeks to learn and use indigenous knowledge. This approach or strategy is widely regarded as a new methodology. It would be accurate to call it a "creative response to a new need". This strategy or approach is a product of Rapid Appraisal (RA) which gives a favourable reaction to the expectations, needs and people oriented responsibilities of development that encourages accountability. This strategy puts the rural people at the center of every development programme. The executors or researchers go to the villages as facilitators, catalysts or as learners, though with local knowledge and understanding of the needs of the people. The strategy has its goal of allowing the local (rural) people to be involved in investigating and sharing their knowledge. The facilitators also teach the people on how to do the analysis, presentations of plan and to own the outcome. Research has shown that Raid Appraisal (RA) is a methodology for International Development Research, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. This methodology is used to gather, analyze and deliver research and development information that is timely, cost effective, accurate and contextual. This strategy has been adopted as essential contribution, which is highly useful for development planning and action. This is suitable in virtually all sectors of development including Rural Development.

In a related view, the humanistic approach as an alternative strategy has to do with learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and take action against oppressive elements of reality. Accordingly to Idaresit (2008), this approach is a radical 'interrogation or dialogue with reality in order to reveal its contradictions, irrationalities, problems of the society, problems of discrimination and oppressive elements, in order to develop the means of corrective human intervention. The approach is relatively new in terms of instrument of conducts for human engineering and for overcoming traditional structures. This is aimed at providing the necessary encouragement and equipping the rural man to know and respond to the concrete realities of his or her society. This approach being dialogical in method is deeply rooted on the fact that, for true development to take place in the rural society, adequate consideration must be made to acknowledge the contributions of the women folk. This strategy makes a way to recognizing women and children as integral part in the development of the society. Also, this strategy seeks to create a society free of prejudice, injustices discrimination and women oppression. This simply means a humanistic transformation of the society. (Also see. Arokoyu, 2006; Olufin, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

The development of Nigeria's rural areas as a matter of fact remains a central concern to the policy makers. A critical overviews of past strategies in Nigeria show that, they were bedeviled with numerous problems. Unfortunately at the middle of the problems stand the human factors that is influenced by the burning desire to get richer at all cost. The alternative approach and strategy to Nigeria's societal development must as a matter of fact take place considering all the factors identified above as well as the stakeholders. By this I mean, all development agenda must be participatory. There should be a firm foundation and a serious sacrifice on the part of the people as an imperative for national development. The reform agenda, the Millennium Development Goals and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) can only achieve its goals if the target (rural) poor are allowed to take part on how they would be empowered. This means that they must be well carried along. The people's consciousness must be raised to aid them in realizing the basics of the society; the people's cultural values



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must be understood and incorporated into the main stream of the development programmes. Specifically, their norms, beliefs and myths must be studied, understood and properly aligned with the realities of the development goals. Development must be regarded as a component part of the peoples culture. Both government, non-governmental Organisations and the people must see themselves as partners in progress in the course of development. Through the humanistic approach, the rural areas and indeed the entire society shall begin to experience sustainable growth devoid of vandals and negligence.

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