

Rural Economic Development: Policy Implementation in Nigeria

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Abstract

The rural society has been imperative in the supply of both humans and materials required by various sectors of every economy. But successive authorities are predisposed to neglect. If not relegated to the background, this goose that lays the golden egg in terms of sustenance and development. Oftentimes policies initiated for its development is not adequately and effectively implemented. Therefore, this paper is an attempt at acceptable mechanism for developing and implementing policies for rural emancipation. The paper adopted the exploratory research approach involving the use of secondary source with minimal primary source to generate data through questionnaire and interview guide. The paper observes that the problem is not the lack of effective policy/programme initiation and formulation but the dearth of the political will to implement; high incidence of corruption; complete absence of purposive leadership; misguided and misdirected priority; placing the wrong person at the strategic position; inconsistency and absent of continuity in policy/programmes implementation in government affairs. For a way out amongst others, involvement of the benefiting rural/urban communities in monitoring the implementation of programmes or project execution in their domain is important while avoiding the pitfall of role conflict in policies and programmes formulation cum implementation.

Keywords: Poverty, Rural Development, Economy, Policy, Communities, Empowerment, Society, Emancipation, socioeconomic, Investment

Introduction

The need to bring rural communities to mainstream of contributing meaningfully to the social, cultural and economic development of Nigeria requires an overwhelming priority to be accorded to its policy implementation. As Larson (1985: 3-12) says, a policy or programme is a

way of dealing with public problems of a sort of concrete socio-economic action or a response to weakness and inability of private sector to supply necessary goods and services or a response to a missing link within the norms of the society .It gives direction to action and activities. In order words, policy refers to a verbal, written or implied overall guide setting up boundaries that supply the general units' direction in which administrative or managerial action will take.

There is an urgent demand to strengthen and encourage effective and adequate implementation of policies for rural development programmes. This will help to stem the challenges of rural development which have been of great concern to the different tiers of government in Nigeria -urban migration. Current estimates of the rural population were put at over 80% of the entire population of almost 150 million people. But the rural areas are usually grossly neglected as far as development projects and infrastructure are concerned. This neglect has resulted to the mass exodus of rural dwellers and in turn has made the rural area qualitatively and quantitatively depopulated, ad progressively less attractive for socioeconomic investment. Onibokun (1987:20-34) says rural development is faced with the paradox of production oriented rural economy which relies heavily on non-productive people who are ill-equipped with outdated tools, technical information, scientific and cultural training and whose traditional roles and access to resources pose problems for their effective incorporation into modern economic systems.

The focus of various policies of rural development programme in Nigeria is meant to improve the living conditions in the rural areas with a view to curbing the streaming rural-urban migration. Despite the countless number of rural development policies introduced at different times by successive governments coupled with the huge financial and material resources employed, little or nothing is felt at the rural level as each policy has often died with the government that initiated it before it starts to yield dividends for the rural dwellers. Onuorah (1996: 12 - 16) supports this claim when he states that not minding the lofty objectives of these policies, government's efforts and initiatives never endured beyond the government that initiated the schemes. It is on this note that this paper attempts to examine rural economic development: policy/programme implementation in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Across all developmental system in transitional economies of the world, which Nigeria is one, the term rural has been technically taken to signify any area of underdevelopment, poverty and thin population. Therefore rural development in general is used to denote the actions and initiatives taken to improve the standard of living in non-Urban neighborhoods, countryside, and remote villages. These communities can be exemplified with a low ratio of inhabitants to open space. Agricultural activities may be prominent in this case whereas economic activities would relate to the primary sector, production of food stuffs and raw materials. Rural development actions mostly aim at the social and economic development of the areas under consideration (Paudel, 2007). In this sense given the extent of policies/programmes, attention, care, management and general development inconsistencies associated with Nigeria, the term rural for Nigeria should have a separate encyclopedia.

Rural development as used in Nigeria is disjointed in definition as different scholars tend to view it from varying perspective. Some scholars see rural development from the aspect of education/training like Haddad, (1990), Ilinzen, (2000). Obinne (1991) says rural development involves creating and widening opportunities for (rural) individuals to realize their full potential through education and share in decision making that affect their lives. Olayide et al (1981) view rural development as a means providing basic amenities, infrastructure, improved agriculture productivity and extension services and generate employment for rural dwellers. Umebali and Akubuilo (2006) list the main features of a rural community to include:

- Vicious cycle of poverty;
- Poor infrastructure;
- High population density,
- High level of illiteracy
- Low social interaction and local politics and
- Rural-urban migration

Chinsman (1997) says that the rural people are visibly ravaged by an excruciating poverty, ignorance and disease. In addition rural areas of Nigeria are virtually associated with depression, degradation, poverty and deprivation. In most rural areas in Nigeria, like in other rural setting in developing economies, basic infrastructure, where they exist at all, are too inadequate for any meaningful development. They often depend on shallow wells with untreated water for their water need. The villagers, most of whom are farmers, work on the land from sunrise to sunset only to produce food for the uncontrollable teeming city population. The rural poverty is such that inhabitants, groups, communities and societies at any given point in time experience a level of income below that which is needed to provide a desirable minimum living standard. Adalemo (1987) sees the certainty of poor quality of life in the rural areas as the main phobia that has often pushed migrants to the perceived opportunities in the urban centers.

Though the urban areas are conceived as centers of excellence as far as development, innovations and diffusions are concerned. But on the contrary, urban cities in developing countries are currently facing various socio-economic and environmental problems such as the evolution of blighted areas, high concentration of unemployed citizens necessitating the high incidence of poverty (Asolo, 2000: 152-158). Hinzen (2000: 55) maintains that the rural dwellers have lower health status than urban poor, but share less access to capital and education. The urban poor as well are also confronted with the problems of inadequate water supply, poor sanitation and squalid housing. Hinzen itemized indicators of urban poor situation as visible evidence of growing number of working and homeless children, increased number of young people unable to find formal or semi-formal sector employment, and increased room occupancy rates. In other words, thorough assessments of the urban and rural setting of average developing countries show no apparent difference in standard of living.

It becomes obvious that no serious, active, conscious, sensitive, and organized government who desires economic development would want to neglect its rural communities. Imperatively lack of development has a positive correlation with the neglect of rural areas. Rural neglects bring negative consequences such as exodus of rural dwellers to urban areas, with resulting problems of unemployment, crimes, prostitution, child labour, insecurity, money laundering, bribery, poverty, proliferation of shanty living areas, spread of diseases, and overstretching of the facilities and infrastructures in the urban areas. Any nation that neglects the development and empowerment of the rural communities should not expect meaningful development. Alegbeleye and Aina (1985: 13) reiterate that the third world countries have recently come to realize that unless the rural areas are well developed, hardly would any meaningful development occur in these countries.

In view of the foregoing, series of policies/programmes of economic development were initiated and implemented. Therefore a look at these policies/programmes will be discussed within the context of rural economy, which in itself is made up of agriculture and other rural off-farm activities such as petty trading.

These policies/programmes include the establishment of Federal Department of Rural Development, Directorate for Food and Rural Infrastructure, to stimulate rural development and alleviate some of the anticipated pains of SAP, Integrated, Agricultural/Rural Development Programmes, National Accelerated Food Production Programme, Operation Feed the Nation, the Green Revolution, Agricultural Development Programme, Peoples Bank of Nigeria, Community Banks, Better Life for Rural Women, Family Support Programme, Family Economic Advancement Programme etc. Then came, Poverty Alleviation Programme, and now Poverty Eradication Programme such as National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) with States and Local Government affiliates and poverty reduction or alleviation programmes and National Directorate of Employment, while at the urban level, there is the industrial development programmes, small and medium scale enterprises programme, Federal Urban Mass Transit Programme, National Economic Reconstruction Fund Programme, Commodity Market Programme etc.

Policy Implementation

Public policy as Mabogunje (1981:295-328) says are those definite acts or actions of government geared towards the fulfillment of the obligation of government on the citizens, which are the maintenance of law and order, the provision of social and economic facilities needed for an enhanced standard of living of the people etc. Public policy is usually organized around activities and the strategies to be adopted for its implementation. Akpan (1982:32) says that policy may take legal form of laws passed by the legislative decision of a government, cabinet or boards of directors of public corporations or private companies and even instructions issued by department authorities etc. It consists of patterns of action by government officials equally authoritative and legally binding and with legally coercive quality (Anderson: 1979:3). Policy implementation embraces issuing and enforcing of directives, disbursing of funds, hiring of personnel, negotiating with private citizens of the society it's for full realization. It is

concerned with the putting plans and decisions into action. It is a very vital phase of policy process (Uwazuruike, 1991: 14). Implementation is the process of giving effect to policy so that the objectives of the policy can be achieved. Simply put, it is the stage, which involves the execution of the policy as articulated and adopted. It has to do with moving forward policy/programmes objectives by means of administrative and political steps.

In the various levels of government, policy implementation agencies are part of the government bureaucracy. Therefore, implementation of policy or programmes for economic development at rural level will be by the ministry in charge of economic matters at state level or by economic department at local government. So the relationships between the administrative organigram and policy/programme formulation and implementation are intractable and complex. There is a structured chain of command and unity of purpose in the hierarchy of the system, which must be respected in the implementation of the policies and programmes (Dye, 1972: 102). As a case in point, a review of some of these policies for rural economic development in Nigeria was carried out with a view to highlighting these problems.

(a). The National Accelerated Food Product Programme (NAFPP)

This programme was launched by the federal government in 1972. It was the first major attempt to improve though indirectly the lots of the rural farmers through the promotion of agricultural development. It was a joint programme between the federal, state governments and the farmers. The programme was centered on the development of improved crop varieties by research institutes and their trial on farm field in small plots. NAFPP was beset with innumerable constrains which did not allow it to achieve its objectives. These problems according to Offorah (1988: 13) were inadequate finance, poorly motivated and non-committed extension staff, Lack of feedback from the farmers and inability to replicate the minikit trials. There was inadequate supervision and monitoring of the trial plots while the activities of (NAFPP) were not properly coordinated with the result that expected linkage between the farmers, the extension officer and the research was not experienced.

(b). Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)

By 1976, Nigeria was faced with a deteriorating food situation as a result of greater emphasis on petroleum and the drift of potential farmers to the cities. In order to step up food production, the then dynamic young military government of late General Muritala Mohammed introduced Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) which was vigorously pursued by General Obasanjo after the tragic death of General Mohammed, in February 1976 in a coupdetat. Though this programme was aimed at boosting food production, it was also intended to improve the living standard of the masses especially the rural farmers. The programme stimulated interest in agriculture among the Nigerian society. The programme however failed to achieve the policy objective because it was poorly executed.

(c). The green revolution

In 1980, operation feed the Nation was replaced by green Revolution by the civilian government of Shehu Shagari, as its achievements did not justify the huge sum of money invested in the programme. The programme was designed to improve the lots of rural farmers. The green revolution like its predecessors failed because it lacked relevant strategies and thus its activities were eroded by partisan politics with the result that Nigeria according to Offora (1988: 14-15) ended up becoming the world's greatest importer of food.

(d). The Agricultural Development Project (APP)

This is an integrated agricultural and rural development programme designed to give new impetus to agriculture launched in 1975. It was believed that if all small scale farmers who produce more than 80% of the nation's food and occupy about 55% of the nations land mass are able to increase their production, the nation's need for food and fibre will be adequately met. Thus, rather than engage in direct production, the programme was designed to stimulate and motivate the rural farmers. It may however be difficult to claim that (ADP) has achieved its main goal of transforming the small-scale farmer into a sufficient and successful farmer since that objective has not been realized more than thirty years after its establishment. The major constraints of the programme in almost all the states of the federation includes: Mismanagement of funds, Lack of basic infrastructural facilities like electricity, good water supply and feeder roads in rural areas, inadequate feedback from the farmers

(e). National Directorate for Employment (NDE)

Perhaps, the first direct government programme designed to tackle the problems of poverty alleviation and mass unemployment in Nigeria was the National Directorate for Employment (NDE) inaugurated in November 1986. As Afolabi (1999: 229) puts it, the National Directorate for Employment (NDE) was specifically designed to deal with the problem of mass unemployment among school leavers and graduates in Nigeria. In order to realize the above objective of the (NDE), the Federal Government designed the following strategies: training of the unemployed for the acquisition of skills in different fields to enable them become self-employed or employable; rural employment promotion programme; Small-scale enterprises promotion; formation of co-operative groups; loan to the unemployed in form of credit facilities; ad hoc employment. In spite of these lofty objective and strategies, the NDE has continued to perform below expectation.

(f). The Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLPRW)

Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLPRW) was initiated by Late Mrs. Maryam Babangida in September, 1987 to improve the lot of the rural women. The Blue print of the programme as indicated by Azikiwe (1992:1-3), has its major objectives as to stimulate and motivate rural women towards achieving better living standards, and sensitize the rest of Nigerians to their

problems; to educate rural women on simple hygiene, family planning, the importance of child care, and increased literacy rates; to mobilize women collectively in order to improve their general lot and for them to seek and achieve leadership roles in all spheres of society; to raise their consciousness about their rights, the availability of opportunities and facilities, their social, political and economic responsibilities; to encourage recreation and enrich family life and inculcate the spirit of self-development, particularly in the fields of education, business, arts, crafts and agriculture into rural women.

The general goals of the BLPRW from the forgoing as Azikiwe (1992) observes is to educate women especially those residing in the rural areas in order to improve their socio-economic status and consequently enhance their participation and contribution to national development process. Although the (BLPRW) was widely heralded and acclaimed in government circles, but it was quickly observed that soon after its establishment, the programme became elitist and was therefore hijacked by 'Urban women'. In this respect, Okeke (1999:37) notes that the onset of (BLPRW) normalized the office of the First Lady as the official director of the federal, state and local government levels rural development programme and this contributed meaningfully to failure of the programme in realizing its objectives. By 1997 Maryam Abacha assumed the office of the First Lady and renamed the (BLPRW), the Family Support Programme (FSP). Mrs. Abacha introduced a number of cosmetic changes that could not economically support the families of the rural masses.

(g). The Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)

The Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) was established in 1997. As a poverty alleviation programme, this strategy like its predecessors the (BLPRW) and the Family Support Programme (FSP) were intended to address the various economic problems of the rural masses especially with regards to income generation. Afolabi (1999: 230-233) notes that the noble objectives of the programme which includes to utilize all available local resources for the benefit of Nigerians through improved production, storage, preservation, recycling, packaging and marketing; to improve the living standard of the people; to promote production and development consciousness; Create employment opportunities at ward levels etc could not be achieved. Like the Better life programme, FEAP also became elitist. Its funds were grossly mismanaged. The programme was consequently abandoned at the inception of the current democratic dispensations on May 29, 1999.

(h). The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP)

The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) was launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo in January 2000. PAP was a Stop-gap designed to tackle the problem of unemployment especially among youths in Nigeria. The specific objective of the programme was to set in motion effective economic empowerment for citizens in urban, sub-urban and rural communities. The programme was to last between January and September 2000. Participants who were mostly unemployed graduates were to collect a monthly stipend of N3,500. The programme was hijacked by politicians and beneficiaries were predominantly based on loyalty to the ruling

party, "People Democratic Party (PDP)", Funds meant for the programme were grossly mismanaged as stipends to participants were embezzled in some states while some states that paid were not regular in paying it.

(i). The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo in January 2001. Unlike the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), which was a stop-gap, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) is a permanent programme designed to eradicate poverty in Nigeria through a number of strategies. The major strategy of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) is the Youth Employment Scheme (YES). This also has other sub-strategies, which includes the Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) and the Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP). All these strategies are essentially designed to help the teeming population of unemployed youths in Nigeria to acquire some useful skills, which could help them to become self-reliant. There is indication that the billions of naira earmarked for the programme in the various appropriation bills are been embezzled by the officials of the commission as it has been the case in the past. Since it has been observed that the (NAPEP) forms never got to the intended beneficiaries.

Administrative Organization and Policy Implementation in a Public Institution

Policy implementation is a key factor in realizing the stated objectives of any organization, be it private or public. It is a critical and strategic stage in all efforts to achieve set targets of private organization or government institutions. However, policy/programme implementation is dependent on the organizational structure or organigram of the organization or institutions in question. The success or failure of implementing such policy/programme lies to a large extent on the structural arrangement or the hierarchical setting of authorities in the organization (Ugwu, 2000: 8). The organigram of the local government, which is the smallest unity of government closer to the people, has undergone series of reforms and mutations from the colonial era, through period of the military administration to the present experiment on democratic administration. Indeed a lot of water has passed under the bridge. But then, the emphasis here is on the present National, State and Local governments arrangements, i.e. how effective is the present administrative organigram of these levels of government towards effective policy/programme implementation.

Methodology for the Study

The exploratory research method was adopted for this paper. The paper considered the nature of the problem of rural development in Nigeria; the reform efforts made by successive governments and why these efforts have not yielded the desired result. A number of rural development programmes of various level governments were evaluated in relation to their inherent problems from the period 1972 to 2010. Then a documentation of possible antidotes to such problems was outlined. The data for the paper was generated through primary and

secondary sources. The primary data was by means of questionnaire/interview while secondary data was by means of published and non-published documented works.

Reasons why Government programmes or Policy Fail

Even when the constraints discussed above do not exist, you notice that government policies or programmes still fail. This as Larson (1987: 9) says can be attributed to the following reasons below:

- **Vague or Unrealistic Goals:** A basic reason for the failure of many policies and programmes is lack of clear and realistic goals. The problem of vague goals is most evident in new programmes that propose social innovation. One such programme called the universal Basic Education project can serve as an illustration here. The project was designed to aid about 200 million teenagers from deprived backgrounds to acquire basic education. The programme was an attractive collection of ideas. Where the goals are unrealistic, the policy/programme could suffer from either instrumental failure or failure in normative justification. Instrumental failure means that the programme lacks sufficient instrument for achieving its goals. While in normative justification, a programme fail to receive support from those affected by it and is unworkable.
- **Poor Implementation:** Lack of concern for implementation is currently the crucial impediment to improving programmes operations, policy analysis, and experimentation in social policy for economic emancipation of any society. Great naive about implementation is a human factor which impedes policy implementation. It must be emphasized here that implementation period is not a brief interlude between a bright idea and opening the door for services.
- **Environmental Factors:** Economic policies/programmes are made and executed within a given policy environment. Some of those policy environments include climate, topography, population, political, culture, social structure, technology etc. These factors separately or jointly influence the formulation and implementation of such policies and work against its success (Onah, 19998: 10).
- **The complexity of Intergovernmental Actions:** The problems of creating a policy/programmes that can survive intergovernmental action are closely associated with problems of implementation. As a rule of thumb, the greater the number of actors and agencies involved in a programme, the less likely it is to succeed.
- **Forces in the Economic Environment:** The general state of the economy is a final impediment to the success of the government's policies/programmes. A society plagued by high inflationary-pressure, government policies/programmes are bound to suffer. Other factors include institutional capacity, personnel, necessary materials or logistic supports. Where these elements are not in existence or are inadequate the chances of realizing the objectives of such policies/programmes may not be visible.
- **Bureaucratic Problem:** The nature and pattern of authority allocation or relationship within the local government for instance affect the policy implementation. In the present dispensation where there is no convincing and clear-cut line of duty, cold war, is fought silently between the heads of department and the supervisors, special assistant

and political Advisers who jostle for one political favour or the other from the chairman. Conflict usually arises among them over who supervises such policy/programme. All these can frustrate a policy or programme implementation.

- **Inadequate Funding:** Adequate funding is a *sine qua non* for policy implementation. But this is lacking in almost all the levels of government in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan countries. Inadequate funding brings about poor logistics. Precisely, all the level of government in Nigeria for instance depends heavily on oil for their recurrent and capital expenditure. Such over reliance on one source of revenue weakens the financial base of the government if at any point the oil market fails to live up to expectations. The economic policies and programmes of such government suffer.
- **Communication Problem:** Communication is to administrative process what blood is to human. For policies and programme to be effectively implemented, a good communication network has to be put in place. Remember in form information they say, is power, which comes through effective communication. Lack of information on the nature and philosophy of policies and programmes inhibit bureaucratic implementation of policies. The channels of communication in the various levels of government are often inadequate and this gives room for misinformation and faulty implementation of policies and programmes. Adequate information on policy and programme matters especially to all relevant officers in the implementation process and the people who are the direct beneficiaries of such policies and programmes is inevitable.
- **Political Instability:** Nigeria's socio-economic and political milieu for example has been characterized by unstable climate and economic recession. As a result of this high rate of instability in the political system, the country has experienced series of changes and frequent structural reforms, which have negatively affected policy implementation. These constant and unplanned changes results to each administration coming with its own programmes. Non-continuity in policy and programme implementation becomes the end result. Projects started by previous administrative could be abandoned by the present administration with impunity.
- **Disposition of Implementor:** The value orientation, state of mind and feeling of those who implement policies and programmes at any given point in time affect negatively or positively the implementation. The attitude of the implementer is very vital in policy/programme implementation. In Nigeria where the workers are not adequately motivated, the desire to implement such policies and programmes may not be there (Njoku, 2000: 6-10).

Results and Discussion

The result of the extensive evaluation of the problems bedeviling our rural development includes but not limited to the followings:

- The dearth of the political will to effectively implement policy/programme initiated for rural development.
- High incidence of corruption.
- Lack of purposive leadership.
- Misguided and misdirected priority.

- Placing the wrong person at the strategic position.
- Inconsistency and absence of continuity in the policies and programmes implementation in government affairs.

Conclusion

The research have presented an adroit evaluation of policy or programme formulation, initiation and implementation in Nigeria and have discovered that over the years, policies and programmes have been formulated and initiated for rural/urban economic development, which have gulped billions if not trillions of tax payers' money without any meaningful progress and will continue to be drain pipe for draining our common fund into the private purse of politicians and other functionaries of government if urgent steps are not taking to check the menace.

Recommendations for Ensuring Effective Policy Implementation in Nigeria

To ensure effective policy implementation as well as achieve the objectives of such policies or programmes, administrative organigrams at the local, state and federal government must be clearly defined and maintained, while:

- a. Adequate supervision and monitoring of all persons and agencies involve in policy implementation by the principal officers both at the local, state and federal level.
- b. There should be well-established and clear communication channels cutting across all departments, units and sub-units that have something to do with the policy to facilitate information dissemination.
- c. Feasibility and pilot studies to cover the vital areas should be carried out before policies or programmes are formulated to ensure its suitability, realization and sustainability in terms of adequacy of fund for its implementation.
- d. There is also need for the enlightenment of the rural/urban communities that the policies are to serve their interest on the need to be abreast with the policies of the various levels of government with respect to their economic development.
- e. Officers responsible for policy implementation in the various levels of governments should have clear knowledge of where their duties/responsibilities started and where it ended to ensure that there is no role conflict in the implementation of such policies.
- f. To apply the concept of decision analysis, which allows the different stake holders to participate in the decision process and develop a shared perception.

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