

## **An overview of rural and community development in Nigeria.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the study was to examine rural and community development in Nigeria with emphasis housing policies, and strategies employed to bring about rural development in Nigeria. The study assess the impacts of institutions, agencies and efforts made by both domestic and foreign international organizations. The institutions, agencies and non-governmental organizations are programmed to bring about grassroots development. Therefore, clarification of terminology like development, rural community, and sustainability was conducted, this formed the philology basis of the analysis. Findings has shown that efforts made by the Nigerian government through several strategies like the nation's development plans did not bring about desired development. However, international organizations strategies lead to little or no any meaningful improvement in the living conditions of the rural dwellers and rural infrastructure. It was also found out that a number of issues such as corruption, wickedness and mismanagement, sentimental planning from above rather than basic-productive approach; the quest for self-embellishment, greed and pursuance selfish interest has brought about failure of the rural developmental efforts. The researcher's primary source or method of data collection was based on Analytic studies using descriptive method of data analysis to evaluate the draw backs of rural community development. The paper therefore concludes that for the desired development and growth to a realized and sustained, the government based development process must be reversed to rural-based and bottom-up approach, government must continue to create an environment that is conducive for rural development to thrive, the corruption mentality that has bedeviled government representatives and other stake holders must change in Nigeria in order to eliminate corruption and mismanagement of resources. Therefore, for the realization and sustenance of rural development these measures should be established and implemented.

**Keywords:** Community, Development, Government, Rural.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Rural development is a means of bringing about enduring changes in the structure of the rural sector in a manner that productivity and output are increased, the technology and techniques of production are radically revolutionized with enhanced standard of living (Izeogu, 1987; Nkorn, 2000). The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA, 1972) defined rural development as “The outcome of a series of qualitative and quantitative changes occurring among rural population”. It is a process “by which a set of technical, social, cultural and institutional measures are implemented, for the inhabitants of rural areas with the aim of improving socio- economic conditions of rural populace (ECA 1972). From the foregoing therefore, rural development constitutes a development effort to raise the level of awareness and living conditions of rural dwellers. Thus rural development encompasses radical improvement in social relationship governing land tenure, access to land, technology, labour, physical infrastructures, access to services and political organization of society.

The central objectives of rural development revolve around the productivity, welfare and quality of life of the rural dwellers (Todaro and Smith, 2009). Nigeria gained independence in 1960 from the British colonial government. Ever since then, rural or community development has been declared a priority by the successive governments, be it civilian or military. Today, rural communities face an array of challenges. Resource-based economies are vulnerable to the impacts of commodity prices, technological changes, land value dynamics, and other market influences. Some communities whose economies are contracting are experiencing unemployment, poverty, population loss, the aging of their workforces, and increasing demands for social services with fewer dollars to pay for them. The extent of the deplorable housing situation of the poor in Nigeria has been documented in previous studies (Olotuah, 2005a, Adegbehingbe 2011). This is characterized by substandard and structurally unsound houses often located in insanitary environments. The poor quality of housing inhabited by the poor is a consequence of high level of shortages, in quantitative terms of housing to accommodate them and the lack of the resources to pay for quality housing available. In this regard, several organizations, institutions and agencies have been set up to undertake and monitor the complicated process of nation-building, development and integration. This post colonial orientation is a deviation from the erstwhile colonial arrangement whereby development efforts in all spheres were concentrated in the urban areas to the neglect of rural areas. Hence, projects such as the construction of roads, bridges, schools, railway lines, air trip, ports and marketing boards, among others, were all aimed at opening the rural areas as a link for the easy exploitation of export raw materials.

However, the declared objectives and policy statements of various governments in Nigeria have been mere rhetoric and smoke-screens intended not only to diffuse criticisms but to hide what the whole thing has been i.e. a systematic exploitation and dehumanization of the rural dwellers. In spite of this criticism, there is no doubt that the Nigerian government and its leaders have not only recognized the fact of the important roles which the rural sector plays in the generation of national wealth but also that over 70% of Nigerians live in rural areas. It is to be noted that Nigeria is not alone in the recognition of these facts. Leaders of the developing countries in Africa have also come to accept the development of rural areas as a sine qua non for national development.

In Nigeria, over the years the stated objectives and strategies of rural and community development have been pronounced by policy makers and those concerned with the issue of development. But there still exists enormous gap between policy formulation and implementation and the reality of the level of the development of the rural populace. For example, several approaches in terms of rural development planning and execution have been adopted. Some of these are the creation of states, local government areas, mobilization of people for local participation in planning and implementation of community development projects in order to create new centres of development, and thus stem the drift from rural to urban areas. A look at the National Development plans of Nigeria from 1975-1985 and other rural development programmes like Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, River Basin Development Authorities, Agricultural Development Projects and many others have emphasized the need to tackle the problem of rural under-development. On the part of government therefore there is the realization that there is need to bring the neglected rural areas into the mainstream of national development. The thrust of this paper therefore is to examine the pattern of rural and community development in Nigeria, especially in those areas which have the greatest impact on the lives of rural dwellers, and to establish that the pattern of development of the rural areas was not meant to improve the lives of the rural dwellers. On the contrary, this process has been geared towards their exploitation and impoverishment despite their enormous contribution to national wealth and the fact that over 70% of Nigerians live in the country-side. It is further argued that the bane of Nigeria's development process is the neo-colonial, dependent economic system operating in the country. This system breeds mass poverty and deprivation, social unrest, and political instability.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

An increasing number of rural communities are looking for development approaches beyond the conventional dispersed land use patterns that make it difficult for them to meet their fiscal, social, public health, and environmental goals. They are using a range of strategies to pursue economic opportunities while maintaining the rural character that resident's value. The concept of development is very difficult to define because it is value loaded. It is often equated with economic growth or economic development. The two concepts are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing.

Economic development is an essential component of development, yet it is not the only one. There are many other aspects of development. According to Rodney (1972:9), "development" is: "a many-side process. On the one hand at the level of the individuals, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being". On the other hand, Todaro (1977:96-98) says that: Development must therefore be conceived as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes and institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. In essence, development must represent the entire gamut of changes by which the entire social system, turned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups within the system moves away from the conditions of life regarded as materially and spiritually "better". This means that development involves the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system. This also involves, in addition to improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutions, social and administrative structures as well as in popular attitudes, customs and beliefs.

The implication of these two definitions is that "development" goes beyond economic indicators. It is both a physical process and a state of mind. The institutions or structures like construction of railways, schools, hospital etc are aspect of development. The second aspect of development is that the people must change their attitudes for good. Also, Seers (1969:3) asked certain questions regarding the concept of development saying that: The questions to ask about a country's development are therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems has been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result development even if per capita income doubled. After independence, majority of countries neglected rural development and concentrated on the development of urban areas which to them are first point of contact of any nation. It was only in the wake of outbreaks of famine and various diseases which challenged the living condition

of the urban dwellers that governments took up this subject. Until the 1990s, rural development strategies were focused on the growth of a modern sector through recourse to fertilizers, improved seedling, irrigation and mechanization (Lacroix, 2011:15).

Therefore, Olisa and Obiukwu (1992: iii) said that this remarkable shift from the trend of the post-World War II decades, especially the 1960s (the decolonization decade), during which economic theories and aid programmes focused on growth resulting from national economic development plans and the multiplier effects of massive capital investment. They observed further that it was tacitly assumed that once the national economy developed (featuring such indices as industrialization, modernized agriculture, and modern infrastructure) rural economy would automatically develop. Asian Development Bank (2014) asserted that rural development has become one of the major aims of various assistance/intervention programmes of both individual developing countries and multilateral institutions/donors.

Over the past five decades, Nigeria has never been short of programmes and reforms aimed at alleviating the failing rural economy, livelihood, insecurity and other specific policies associated with poverty alleviation and rural community sustainable development. The Document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) at 50 (2010:618) illustrated that, majority of these programmes developed complications over the years. Since Nigeria gained her political independence in 1960, there has been a great impetus attached to the rural community development as a factor that advances the overall developmental process. According to Ibietan and Oghator (2013:308), the pattern of development in Nigeria creates social problems of hunger, mass unemployment and social inequalities. Another factor is the idea of conceiving development planning as a “big push strategy” which attempts to do everything in one plan. Usman (2004:11) explained that political office holders in Nigeria are always drawn from the wealthy business classes, schools and universities, professional groups, government administration, religious and traditional conglomerations of authority.

Elites in Nigeria enter into politics to amass wealth without shame (Wilmot, 1994 in Uba, 2012:64). For the Nigerian political elite, politics involves not the conciliation of competing demands arising from an examination of the various alternatives entailed by the extraction of resources which can be used to satisfy elite demands and to buy support (Dudley, 1982 in Adalakun, 2013). Uba (2012:78) citing Nnoli (1980) supported elite model that rural development evolves from the crying need of the rural population for social welfare services, the unwillingness of the ruling class to provide these amenities, the exploitation of the ruling class of the competition among communities for those social artifacts which are deemed to reflect social progress, and the exploitation by the ruling class of the tendency by Nigerians to invest more time, energy and resources in those

tasks approved by their community than in those sanctioned by the national collectivity through the State. Socio-economic development of the developing countries of the world outside 'Development Administration'. It is this reality as highlighted by Alege (2005:55) that has made the government at different times to set up various programmes and specialized credit institutions in an attempt to transform and develop rural areas in all its ramifications and thereby moving rural dwellers from abject poverty and squalor to economic and social prosperity. He added that some of those programmes and credit institutions are yet on-going, some are moribund and others have gone with the regimes that initiated them. Ibietan and Oghator (2013:308) noted that successive governments have indicated desire to transform the country, be it in terms of provision of infrastructure, human capacity development and even in the realm of social political development. In this wise, Nigeria has experimented with several development plans from pre-independence era till date, yet the needed transformation has continued to elude its citizenry in spite of the robust plans. There was also Vision 2010 and Nigeria 20:2020, and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

According to Sam (2014:6), there have been attempts by successive regimes in Nigeria at poverty reduction and rural development; the approaches have usually been determined by the interpretation given to rural development by the different regimes or interventionists. In addition, Tenuche and Ogwo (2005:126) enumerated other various programmes aimed at developing the rural areas. These include the Agricultural Development Programmes and River Basin Development Authorities, Operation Feed the Nation and the Green Revolution, rural electrification schemes, rural banking schemes, urban and rural water supply schemes, credit schemes to small scale holders through various specialized institutions, transport schemes, health schemes, Universal Primary Education scheme, and low cost housing scheme. These policies show the zeal of different governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which has led to the proliferation of development agencies. Despite the numerous 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. Okhankhuele and Opafunso (2013:186-187) claimed that several methods to remove rural urban development gap have been carried out in Nigeria with little success, therefore the rural areas still remain highly underdeveloped in comparison with the urban areas. They believed that numerous studies have been carried out on the causes and consequences of rural-urban migration and also related the consequences of rural-urban migration on the urban centers to serious problems such as overpopulation, insufficient physical and social infrastructural amenities. There are variety of rural

development models and programmes devoid of desired achievements as a result of emphasis on agricultural development.

In a nutshell, intervention policies more often than not are urban bias, leaving the rural poor to continue in their hardship which Bertolini, Montanari and Peragine (2008:7) identified as the main social and economic problems in rural areas. These are in form of Demographic - low birth rate, negative natural increase, higher mortality rate depopulation, especially due to out-migration by the young people caused by lack of employment, low population density; Labour market: low educational status, higher rates of unemployment and long-term unemployment; Spatial dimension of poverty as being exacerbated by a poor and deteriorating infrastructure; Significant fragmentation of land's ownership. Rural welfare being constrained by low levels of income, driven by low wages in rural areas, high unemployment, and low levels of agricultural productivity. Access to basic services (water, sanitary, health and so on) is very limited in rural areas. There are great disparities in regional development due to a number of factors including history, culture, natural endowment and politics. In the same way, Alege (2005:61) noted that Nigeria has never been bereft of good policies and programmes, the major problem has been poor implementation. Nigeria can be described as a nation that has no specific, well formulated, clear regional development policy or framework (The Document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) at 50, 2010:663).

Nigerians have since independence experienced numerous rural community development programmes initiated by successive civilian and military governments beginning with the National Development plans which have not yielded desired results. Omale (2005:148,149) pointed out that rather than being a process of evolution from one stage of strategy to another stage and thus a process of building on past programmes and experience, it has been a process of total change from one strategy to another. He highlighted further that the strategies have been rather numerous and ...not too many successes have been recorded. Despite the whole plans and the development programmes and policies, there are still poverty of socio-economic development and welfare of the people. The most important thing to observe from the foregoing is the fact that despite numerous rural development programmes adopted in Nigeria from independence to date, the rural areas' situation remains sorry and pitiable.

The effect of this is the concomitant phenomenon of rural-urban migration that has manifested in 'urban challenges', characterized by an increase in pressure on socio-economic infrastructure including access to clean and portable water, adequate healthcare, access to basic education, proper sewage and waste disposal systems, amongst others (The Document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN)at 50, 2010:663). Overpopulation also places undue stress on basic life-sustaining resources, which

ultimately results in diminishing wellbeing and quality of life. It has also created new challenges such as climate change, depletion in resources, food insecurity, social and spatial inequalities, economic instability, urban sprawl and unplanned pre-urbanisation in the 21st Century.

Following these developments, Ogwu (2005:202) posited that the local governments in Nigeria are expected to constitute the grassroots organ that should stimulate and mobilize the rural communities for an integrated development to solve the problems of poverty; unemployment, ignorance, and inequality. The reverse is the case in Nigeria as pictured by Arizona-Ogwu (2007:2) thus: Local government areas are supposed to be the engines of national development. A quiet rural community grows into a bustling city, and the local leader makes this possible. Sustainable development is a vital aspect which is not created by planning alone, however, deliberate programme management and monitoring of the conditions that will bring about sustainability is essential during programme implementation. When applied to rural development, “sustainability” is not limited only to continued existence of programmes long after their existence; it also means that sustainable rural development can be defined both as a process and as a policy goal. As a process, it defines a movement and a desire for development efforts and programmed to take cognizance of ecological factors by ensuring ecosystem balance. It is a call that development should both destabilize the environment by over drawing a nature introducing pollutants into the ecosystem or disrupting or terminating other forms of life (the non-human species) so that our planet can be made safe and habitable even as we appropriate the bounties of nature for human ends. Sustainable rural development calls for the introduction of environment friendly technologies, habits, production systems and environmental impact assessment (EIA) of human activities so as to avoid activities that may have adverse effects on the environment as well as the human and non-human species. As a policy goal in sustainable rural development addresses the creation, promotion and co-ordination of awareness, enabling conditions and concrete action towards rural development. It describes the initiative of government. Policy makers, environmental protection groups, industrial executives and the international community involving many people and organizations of different categories, social classes and interest at various levels in becoming knowledgeable skilled pursuers of sustainable rural development and to transmit such knowledge, skills and strategies to target individuals and groups (Olugbenga, 2002, p.65).

As a policy goal, sustainable rural development is a key-phrase that matches globalization and the information technology revolution in importance. It views investment in the environment as a way of harmonizing rural society and the natural

environment on a long term basis. Sustainable rural development requires these at the grassroots levels with an eye for rural peculiarities (World Bank, 2001, p.1) The challenges of rural communities in Nigeria include lack of basic infrastructures, poor access to roads, poor educational facilities, lack of portable water, low per capita income, high unemployment and inadequate power supply. Esema (2010) as cited in Bassey (2011), affirmed that rural communities are usually characterized by poor health, lack of basic nutrition, inadequate housing, are socially discriminated against and have no channels through which to voice their concerns. Rural development is part of general development that embraces a large segment of those in great need in the rural sector.

Hunter (1964) considers rural development as the starting point of development. Ogidefa (2010) sees rural development as creating and widening opportunities for rural people to realize their full potential through education and share in decisions and actions which affect their lives. He further asserted that rural development involves efforts to increase rural output and create employment opportunities and root out fundamental cases of poverty, diseases and ignorance. On a general note, development is seen as a process by which man increases or maximizes his control and use of the material resources with which nature has endowed him and his environment. However, the federal government took a giant step towards reconstruction and opening up more feeder roads in the country through establishment of the following programmes to compliment the efforts of federal and state governments:- Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI), Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), Agriculture Development Programme (ADP), Accelerated Development Areas (ADA), Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA) etc. The government should not only sponsor projects, but equally make available grants and technical experts to supervise rural development projects. Okwor (2004:3) stated that cooperative societies, religious organizations, age grades, town unions, political societies should sponsor and supervise rural development activities. He also stated that informal groups of association, such as social clubs, woman's association, scouts, and guides associations should be involved. Ugwueze (2004:4) stated that government should not sponsor rural development alone, he pointed out that rural dwellers for whom the programmes are designed for must take part in the planning, execution and assessment of such programmes. So, both the rural dwellers and the government should be involved in supervision and sponsorship of developmental projects. In Isi-Uzo Local Government, it was a joint effort of the government and the local people.

The rural dwellers have sponsored so many developmental projects example, Nkwo Neke market project. Agricultural Development programme was established in some states of federation by federal government with the assistance of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) for integrated rural development to all

parts of the country. According to Ministry of Agriculture (2004:6) the programme made a great achievement in the areas of fertilizer, they recorded 67.5 metric tons in first quarter, also there was improvement in seeds/planting materials like tomatoes, coco-yam, groundnuts, rice etc. the report further stated that there was a lot of achievements in areas of livestock, poultry and Agro-chemicals. Contributing further on achievement of Enugu State Development Programme (ENDP) Asadu, (2004:46) stated that large quantities of improved maize seeds for planting were available at the state Agricultural Development Programme, adding that these measures would increase food production in the state. He stated further that the state government has procured 8000 Metric tons of fertilizer for distribution to farmers this farming season at subsidized prices.

Nigeria is vast, it stretches over 800 miles of land from Atlantic Ocean in the south to Sahara desert in the North, and about 650 miles in the East to West direction. Nkemjika (2003:3) stated that before the civil war in 1967, Nigeria had a road network of 65,400 miles out of which 9,800 miles were tarred.

He further stated that these roads were tarred without survey; they were characterized with narrow bridges, sharp bends, and tall hills and so on. The creation of state in Nigeria widened the network of roads in the country. Between 1970 to 1980 there was a tremendous in road development in Nigeria, roads were surveyed before tarring, there was less slaps, wider and straight roads. These new roads cut across major towns giving room for township expansion. Through the adult education programmes the rural dwellers develop skills and knowledge and improved in agricultural production though the use of improved seed and animal varieties. The Universal free primary education contributed a lot in reducing illiteracy, many children from poor parental background benefited from the programme. Many teachers were trained and given automatic employment, thereby reducing unemployment in the country. Equally, many schools were built and equipment provided.

Also introduction of the Universal Basic Education in 2000, which is compulsory free Primary education to junior secondary school level, is another bold step of reducing illiteracy in the country. Since the inception of the programme, many classroom blocks have been constructed in different parts of the country and many educational materials supplied to many schools. The Government of Enugu State has renovated more than 150 primary and secondary schools, distributed seater desks to schools. Equally, the introduction of school meal plus programme is another breakthrough, in which the state in conjunction with international donor agencies like Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) are sponsoring the programme. Mgbo, (2004:45) stated that the school meal plus programme is a holistic education programme designed by the Enugu state

government to improve the nutrient deficiencies in school children aged 2-6 in all the public primary schools; by providing them with one balanced meal at school daily. She further stated that the children are also to be provided with vitamin supplements, immunized against the eight child killer diseases, deworm and malaria preventive drugs administered on them by qualified health workers. The programme was flaged off in 2004 by Governor Chimaroke. A total twenty selected primary schools in three Local Government Areas of Isi-Uzo, Aniri and Uzo Uwani are pilot schools. Though the programme is relatively young, it has recorded encouraging increase in pupils' enrolment. Now almost the whole local governments in Enugu state are benefiting from the programme. This programme is worthy of emulation that the Federal Government has decided to borrow a leaf from Enugu state.

The minister of education announced the introduction of the programme in the country. At tertiary level, many structures have been completed and work is going on at permanent site of Enugu State University of Science and Technology at Agbani, dumped for 28 years ago. Equally Nigerian law school branch was established in Enugu, and millions of naira was spent on the project. So, illiteracy posed a great problem to successful planning and implementation of government programmes in the country. The literate ones are more easily mobilized than their illiterate counter pants. The illiterate ones are ignorant of the merits of governments' development efforts. Government should lay more emphasis on education because it is the biggest industry in any nation. One of the monumental achievements of the president Obasanjo's administration was the privatization of the communication sector, a development that saw the grating of licenses to operators of the Global Satellite Mobile (GSM) telecommunication.

The telephone lines have increase from about 450,000 lines before in 1999 to a high as more than twelve million lines in less than five years. This has turned Nigeria into Global village. Millions of unemployed youths have been gainfully employed through the operations of the telecommunication companies, thereby reducing and hardship in the country. Adeboye (2005:3) stated that government determined to take telecommunications to its citizens residing at the rural areas; the Federal government has imported equipment worth of N74 billion to boast its rural telephone project. The essence of this project is to extend telephone to local government headquarters in the federations. Even the two Chinese firms involved in the project have also provided their N24 billion concessionary loan for it and have commenced work in some local government. Isi-Uzo Local Government is going to benefit from the project. Modern communication media play an important role in the development of rural Africa. The importance of press, radio and television was recognized in 1980 by the inter-governmental conference or conference or communication policies in Africa, which agreed that communication

should be seen within a global approach to development, particularly in matters of education, services and technology. So, there is the need to communicate to rural people to provide the people with maximum information about any introduction of economic and social change. The objectives of these efforts would depend upon the proper functioning of a purposeful and effective communication structure. By their nature, mass media can circumvent the rural problem of illiteracy, scattered population, and scarcity of transportation facilities and shortage of skilled manpower. Equally Obidike (2004:17) identified the following strategies for rural development.

The mobilization approach - The mobilization approach emphasized on the popular participation of the people in the rural development process. It de-emphasizes the role of government. The government guides the people while the people play dominant role in the formulation and implementation of the policies. So the role of government is limited to advisory role and mobilization process. This type of development can be described as development from below and it is common among the socialist countries like china, Cuba and Tanzania during Nyerere regime. Directive Approach-The directive approach is a situation where an outside body or association or government comes to a community, identify the problems of the community and solve those problems. This approach requires minimum participation of the community itself. Here it is the government or agencies that shoulder the responsibility of promoting rural development because the government enjoys the monopoly of the resources of the country. This technocratic approach of rural development is practiced or common in capitalist countries. Non-Directive Community Approach – the community themselves will identify their problems without any assistance from any outside body and solve. It involves the pulling of their human resources together to transform their economic improvement. It is a government of self-effort, self-improvement, and it is based on pressing needs of a particular community. For example, women, Age grades, and Youth associations etc. formed and these associations execute the programmes. Agricultural extension – the Agricultural extension is what the third world countries have used to achieve rural development. It is very important in third world countries because of income, foreign exchange earnings and employment. No country can achieve economic development without agriculture and that is the reason we call it backward and forward linkage. It is designed to educate the rural people to engage in agricultural to improve their productivity and incomes. It entails the diffusion and dissemination of knowledge of modern agricultural practices to farmers.

The agricultural extension has come to be broadly conceived as an educational programme of people on how they can improve their totality of living standard. Migration, whether at the international or local level be deliberate decision or attempt by

the migrant to reap social or economic benefit associated with changing locations. There are different types of migration. Internal migration is termed as the movement of people to a new home in a state, country or continent while external migration is the movement to a new home in a different state, country or continent (Adepoju, 2003; Adamu, 2009; Agbonlahor and Enilolobo, 2013) The term growth point (GP) means increasing in size both in number of facilities, building and services provided at an identified centre. Thus, once a centre has been established there should be an observable change in spatial structure and pattern. One would assume that the spatio-temporal expansion is development. It quickly reminds one of the links between growth and development. Whilst the word growth implies expansion development implies quantitative growth and the quality of growth introduced to the selected centres. Thus, these terms are commonly used interchangeably in rural planning (Manyanhaire, Rwafa and Mutangadura, 2011). It therefore means that development per se cannot be tied to economic advancement only but a general improvement in the living conditions of the people over time. Development is also aimed at improving the living conditions of the people through the effective management of both the human and materials resources. Thus, Gana (1986:2) noted that “Development concerns the capacity and creative capability of a people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the imaginative and practical application of their creative talent and productive power”. This implies that the people must be empowered to be able to meet their basic needs of food, housing, health, transport, education, employment, reduction in poverty level and increased per capita income. This is what is lacking in the rural areas of Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa where about eighty percent of the population live in the rural areas.

A critical examination of the definition of “development” shows that “development” must necessarily include, the reduction or elimination of poverty, illiteracy, disease, malnutrition, and joblessness. It is a programme which has the objective and strategy aimed at transforming the citizens in the rural areas from being the victims of poverty, ignorance and disease into a contented human beings, able to earn an income capable of sustaining a reasonable standard of living for themselves and their families. It also means the ability to provide the basic necessities of life such as food, jobs, affordable and accessible health care, good roads, water, electricity and education.

According to the United Nations (1976:4): The concept of integrated rural development implies that it is a composite or comprehensive programme for rural development in which all relevant sectors such as agriculture, education, housing, health and employment are conceived as interlinking elements in a system having horizontal as well as vertical linkage in operational and spatial terms. The scope of the concept of rural or community development is very wide. It is a multi-dimensional process involving such

areas as agriculture, health, education, provision of rural infrastructures, social life, political and economic issues, commerce and industry, among others, and their integration with the national economy. Since the scope of the concept is wide it is the pivot on which a sound national development in all its ramifications can effectively be achieved. It is, however often assumed by policy makers and development planners that rural development is synonymous with agriculture. Aziz, (1999) affirms that the concept of rural development should be viewed as a holistic concept, which recognizes the complexity and inter-relatedness of the many variables which influence the quality of life in rural areas. It is a complex process, which involves the interaction of economic, social, political, cultural, technological and other situational factors.

Hence for the actualization of the concept, these factors have to be integrated with local government policies and plans with the objectives of improving the quality of life of the people in the rural sector. Furthermore, according to Mabogunje, (1981), rural development is concerned with the self-sustaining improvement of rural areas and implies a broad based re-organization and mobilization of the rural masses so as to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with the changes consequent upon this. In the opinion of Gana, (1996), rural development is important not only for its impact on rural places and people but also for its contribution to the overall development of the nation. In the Nigerian experience where the bulk of the people and land are rural, and where the level of rural output is very low, rural mobilization provides the quickest and most direct route to national development. This would require the adoption of appropriate technology for raising rural productivity and efficient utilization of resources, creation of efficient transport network for rural and urban areas to ensure easy transportation of agricultural produce for massive food production and supply of industrial raw materials. Rural development includes generation of new employment, more equitable access to arable land, equitable distribution of income, widespread improvement in health, nutrition and housing, creation of incentives and opportunities. It also involves the ability of the local government to create wider opportunities for individuals to realize their full potentials through education and sharing in the decisions and actions which affect their lives.

The word “rural” connotes a place with agricultural orientation; the houses are farm houses, barns, sheds and other structures of similar purposes. As asserted by Olisa and Obiukwu (1992) population is the main characteristic that differentiates rural from urban areas, especially in the developing countries. In this regard, in Nigeria an area with a population of 20,000 people and below is classified as a rural area. However, this is not adequate to explain a rural area. Therefore according to Olisa and Obiukwu (1992: 65):

The main features of rural areas are depression, degradation and deprivation. Many rural villages are immersed in poverty so palpable that the people are the embodiment of it. In most rural area in Nigeria, basic infrastructure where they exist at all, are too inadequate for meaningful development.

In other words, the rural areas lack virtually all the good things of life like roads, medical and health facilities, portable water, electricity etc. As pointed out above, these characteristics are not limited to rural areas alone but are also found in urban areas in Nigeria and other developing countries. The people engage in subsistence agriculture, their standard of living is very low, earning only a few thousands of naira annually, they are poorly served by almost all public amenities and they generally show considerable resistance to change in any form.

### **3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS IN NIGERIA.**

There are both challenges and opportunities associated with building sustainable cities. The multidimensional impact of megatrends represents a strategic opportunity for taking an integrated approach to urban planning and a major opportunity for investment in industrial transformation, improved infrastructure, social development and environmental management. Sustainable development in growing cities, of poor countries in particular, implies investment in infrastructure such as roads, water, sewers, electricity and services such as schools, public transportation and health-care. Leapfrogging investment in green industrial transformation can generate employment for the “youth bulge” dividend experienced by those countries.

In cities of middle- and high-income countries, investment in the production and use of renewable sources of energy, as well as in the renovation of infrastructure, retrofitting of buildings and improved efficiency in the use of electricity and water, is important. At the same time, investment in strategies for the reduction of waste production and improvement of waste collection and recycling systems are needed in most cities across the world. Inevitably, there will be trade-offs between investments yielding benefits in the short term, e.g., infrastructure for development, and those with benefits in the long term, such as environmental protection and disaster risk reduction. Cities’ contribution to sustainable development can be multiplied if more countries are committed to that goal and when people are able to produce, consume and govern their behavior in a sustainable manner. Thus, urban sustainability defined within the framework of a global integrated approach must include both developed and developing countries. The rural development initiatives by the government have created a culture of dependence on the part of the people rather than the people themselves initiating development orientations. While it is

the responsibility of government to create the enabling environment for community or rural development, the attendant corruption, greed and mismanagement associated with these institutions and agencies have not allowed them to achieve their desired objectives. In this connection Okpaga (2004) asserted that “Rather than making these institutions vehicle for rural transformation, they become conduit pipes from where public funds are siphoned into private pockets”. Added to the above is the fact that the British colonial administration did not concern itself with planning for the development of the rural areas. Indeed, development is the very antithesis of colonialism. The few amenities and infrastructure that were available were concentrated in the few urban towns particularly in the “European Quarters” or “White Reserved Areas”.

Generally, the demand for labour in rural Nigeria is seasonal and full of reservations; the country’s poor rural depend mostly on agriculture for food and income. About 90 per cent of Nigeria’s food is produced by small-scale farmers who cultivate small plots of land and depend on rainfall rather than irrigation systems. The disproportions created as a result of these attributes have produced huge disparities in income level between rural and urban areas, unemployment and underemployment resulting in unmitigated poverty for majority of rural Nigerians. Farmers, teachers and government officials with little or no training in relevant skill set rely heavily on families in urban areas for support and often times take up multiply part-time jobs in all forms of rural enterprises as a survival strategy. Finally, vital input such as transportation facilities, electricity, water, business premises and information are lacking in rural economies because of inadequate government attention. The rural population that constituted over 70% of Nigerians and who produced the bulk of the colonial wealth only felt the impact of government in the form of tax drives, occasional visits by colonial officials and their agents and stories fed them by few urban dwellers or those who had been there. Thus, Onimode (1981:33) observed that: “The rural dwellers who were impoverished by multiple taxation, broken by colonial police and court repression, and submerged in a culture of silence’ through illiteracy, were undoubtedly among the most brutally exploited by the savage colonialism of Britain”. This situation has not radically changed even after independence from British rule. The exploitative and western-oriented policies and programmes of the colonial era have continued since independence. One area that the western-oriented policies and programmes have persisted since 1960 is in the area of agriculture. Emphasis was placed on the production of cash crops and the importation of foreign foods to the neglect of local staples. The continued pursuance of this policy with the resultant neglect of the rural areas and the exploitation of peasant farmers has proved disaster for the country. The urban-based nature of Nigeria’s development process led to a gradual deterioration in the quality of life in the rural areas, thus stimulating rural-urban

migration on a massive scale, especially when mineral oil over took agriculture as the mainstay of the national economy. The helpless situation of the rural communities was accentuated by the exploitative tendencies of the Nigerian Marketing Boards of the 1950s, lack of incentives to farmers, antiquated farming techniques, lack of storage facilities, poor transportation network etc. fastened the decline in agriculture generally (Nnadozie, 1986:11). Another area in the Nigerian agricultural policies and programmes where rural dwellers and farmers are being marginalized is the area of big agricultural schemes in various parts of the country. The policy pursued by government since mid-1970s ostensibly to boost agriculture started with Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) launched in 1976, the Green Revolution in the Second Republic and various budgetary incentives in large-scale agriculture. Similarly the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) and big irrigation dam schemes were ostensibly to improve rural development. All these projects which are scattered in different parts of the country and jointly financed by the World Bank and Nigerian government did not help much in the improvement of the living standards of the rural populace. Rather it has worsened the plight of peasants by depriving them of their lands as happened in Bakolori project in Sokoto state. The beneficiaries of these capital-intensive agricultural programmes and schemes were the big barons who live in the urban area. The monies they got as loans never went to agriculture but to other businesses.

The neglect of the peasant farmers has obviously led to faster decline in agricultural production with attendant negative consequences for rural development (Nnadozie, 1986). It is also disheartening to note that in the area of investment and government provision of amenities, the urban areas are more favoured than the rural setting. Diejomaoh (1973:100-103) have shown that over the years: “The beneficiaries of government expenditure on education, health, water supply, electricity, industries and road construction are mainly urban dwellers and that less than 30% of total government development expenditure is designed for the benefit of rural communities”. In spite of the importance of and potentialities of the rural sector in terms of its workforce, and its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), of the estimated private sector investment amounting to about N1,632 million in the second national development plan period (1970-1974), only N246 million or 15% was spent in the rural areas. This pattern is basically the same in the Third and Fourth Development plan periods, 1975-1985 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1970-74). The various aids and assistance to Nigeria by international organizations and institutions like UNO, USAID, DFID, WHO, and others have not been utilized to the benefit of rural development in Nigeria. This has been due to rampant corruption and gross mismanagement at all levels of governments in Nigeria. The net effect of the above analysis is that the rural areas of Nigerians are greatly

neglected in various spheres of human endeavour. They lack the basic needs of life, they are deprived and exploited, and hence rural development in Nigeria has remained a mirage. An integrated approach to rural development will be based on a holistic view of its social development, economic development, environmental management at the local, national and global levels and governance components. It will entail the coordination of objectives and programmes among different city stakeholders (e.g., citizens, government and the business sector), as well as the development of linkages between and within socioeconomic sectors and activities. In economic terms, the integrated approach tries to improve synergies and efficiencies among activities such as public transportation, energy consumption, biodiversity and human health. Further, under an integrative approach, city administrations would integrate investment in various types of infrastructures with the development of institutional and management capacities and the active participation of all stakeholders in the process of building sustainable cities. The city of Curitiba in Brazil has gained worldwide recognition for having successfully developed that kind of integrated approach to sustainability over the past 40 years.

At the national level, the integration of the rural and urban sectors is critical. Wider access to public services and development of linkages with industrial development can leverage rural sector capacities to exchange resources and information, and engage in social interaction, with urban areas. Investment in economic and social infrastructure in rural settlements can be a catalyst for reducing rural-urban migration. Although every area is characterized by a different configuration of land use, resources and potentials, the systemic integration of different villages, towns and cities in the context of their particular specializations and strategic locations can bring sustainable development to both urban and rural areas.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

Rural communities are facing a lot of challenges even with so much potential. Implementation of policies is paramount for any rural community to enjoy a sustained development. The focus of the Policy is on developing the rural areas, raising the quality of life of the rural people, alleviating rural poverty and using rural development to contribute to laying a solid foundation for national development. To achieve integrated and even development on a sustainable basis, the strategies enumerated in the Policy will empower rural dwellers through the development of productive employment, enhancing their income, ensuring protection of the environment, promoting gender responsiveness and ensuring adequate care for vulnerable groups. Arising from all the above, this paper offers a number of recommendations as a way of solving the lingering problems of rural underdevelopment in Nigeria. Since over 70% of Nigerian population live in the rural

areas and produce the greatest wealth of the nation, the rural areas should be accorded more recognition in terms of budgetary provisions and provision of social and economic amenities. The production needs of rural dwellers centre around infrastructural facilities, adequate extension services, and financial credit. Therefore feeder roads are needed to effectively link and integrate peasants all over the country with the urban centres to enable them to evacuate their products from the farms. They also need adequate water supply for drinking and irrigation, especially in the arid parts of the country. Government should provide the environment to foster rural and community development in Nigeria. Facilities such as education, health services, electricity supply, education, health and general quality of life are acutely inadequate in the rural areas. There is also need to adequately train the farmers in the use of new techniques of farming and for them to be provided with farming equipments like tractors, fertilizers and pest control chemicals at subsidized prices that those peasants can afford. In this regard, the current practice of absentee farmers living in the urban areas trading in fertilizers meant for real farmers should be stopped. Government should endeavour to deal directly with the real farmers in the rural areas if rural development is to be achieved. The so-called “agricultural credit guarantee scheme’ under which commercial banks are encouraged to give peasant farmers loans guaranteed by the federal government through the Central Bank need to be reviewed. This is because the processes involved, including feasibility studies- required to secure those loans are beyond the capability of peasant farmers. The fact of the matter is that agricultural credit facilities in Nigeria have been designed for the big capitalist farmers. This policy should be reviewed to favour the peasant farmers who live in the rural areas. The rampant and endemic corruption, greed and mismanagement associated with institutions for rural development should be ripped in the bud. This requires the intensification of the crusade against these vices by the government and her agencies like EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission) and ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission). This requires the change of attitude by the political leaders to deal with the situation squarely. Therefore, the Nigerian state should make deliberate efforts to create a virile and credible institutions and structures that would enhance rural development.

Furthermore, it is advocated that Nigeria should try to break away from the neo-colonial and dependent nature of the economic and social system. As long as we operate these social and economic systems of dependence, development in the real sense of the term will remain a mirage. In the long run what we would witness will be continued exploitation and domination by western or foreign investors. Rural development in Nigeria should not be the concern of only Federal, State and local governments. It is important that individuals, communities, corporate organizations nongovernmental

organizations and international organizations and agencies must be deeply involved in the efforts at eradicating poverty, enhancing rural development and the overall national development of the country.

There is the need for change of attitudes on the part of the citizenry, particularly public office holders to embrace the virtues of hard work, commitment, integrity transparency and accountability in the conduct of government business. It is then, and only then that rural development in Nigeria will become reality. From the foregoing analysis it is obvious that rural or community development in Nigeria has not received its fair share in the scheme of things. The institutions and agencies charged with the responsibility for rural development and the policies and strategies adopted to meet these objectives have not lived up to expectation of the rural dwellers in particular and the nation in general. It has been shown that in spite of the numerous natural resources that Nigeria is endowed with, majority of the citizens, particularly in the rural areas live below 'absolute poverty line'. Therefore there exists mass poverty as a result of the lopsided and urban-based development process which the governments in Nigeria have pursued till date. For instance the various World Bank, IMF and other multinational corporations-sponsored large-scale agricultural projects were not intended to better the lot of the rural dwellers. These projects and schemes are based on obsolete trickle-down theory by which the main beneficiaries are supposed to diffuse information and motivate the small peasant farmers, who would then follow their example. It would be difficult for Nigeria to attack its poverty unless it stops discriminating against peasant farmers and rural population.

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