

RESEARCH NOTE

Rural Development: Conceptual Issues and Implications for Agricultural Development in Delta State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper reviewed the influence of rural development on agricultural development. The review focused on the overview of agricultural and rural development, rural-urban transformation schemes in relation to agricultural development status, problems and prospects of rural development projects in relation to agricultural development status, the features fostering agricultural development in rural environment and described community as a social system. The poor status and non-functionality of some rural development projects mentioned were water availability, electricity provision, health center, access road network, skill acquisition, agriculture support and market stalls. The challenges of agricultural development and rural development are interwoven. The review revealed that reluctance to resolve rural development issues and technological barriers contributed to poor agricultural development. Invariably, agricultural extension efforts were reduced. The paper concluded that the ways forward among other things were more establishment and renovations of rural infrastructure and provision of agricultural technology, and empowerment of extension agents for sustainable agricultural development.

KEYWORDS: Rural-Urban, Development, Project, Agriculture, Extension

INTRODUCTION

The global views of development practitioners meaning of Rural Development appeared to be fused with the Millennium Development Goals which include accessibility to improved health care availability of drinkable water, health care, presence of good roads, decrease in poverty index and abundance of agricultural products development of the rural areas and human resources development. Rural Development has become an important issue when discussing the issues of nation building. Mba (2008) described rural development as a process whereby concerted effort are made in order to facilitate significant increase in resource productivity with the central objectives of enhancing rural income and creating employment opportunities in

rural communalities; and to encourage rural dwellers to remain in the areas. It is also seen as an integrated approach to food production, provision of physical, social and institutional infrastructure with an ultimate goal of bring about good health care delivery system, affordable and quality education, improved and sustainable agricultural development among other things. According to Anyanwu (1992), rural development involves strategies for improving community social and economic systems of values. The rural community development is based on a notion that is geared toward changes for a better living. The primary aim of rural development therefore is change. The change can be deliberate or purposely modified through the willing cooperation efforts of the rural people, governmental or non-governmental bodies for the achievement of community improvement. Changes are synonymous to development. In the context of rural development, various models have been proposed to identify and study of rural development. These models include; the sectorial development model, integrated development model, structural transformation model, urban development model, as well as industrial development model. These models are seen as driving force or factors of structural change and influence of complete decisions (OECD, 2004).

The industrial development model sees rural development as the opening up of industries in rural areas. These industries are pivotal to rural development as it can stimulate trade, open up employment opportunity as well as attract agro-allied industries. These can totally transform the rural areas to urban areas. The sectorial development model also referred to as the agricultural model was practiced in Nigeria. This is because, the model is focused on one sector of the economy which in Nigeria is predominantly agriculture with the intention that development will spread to other sectors and bring total rural development. In Nigeria, agriculture used to be the main stay of Nigeria economy prior to oil boom era (1980s till date). Most rural dwellers still engage in agricultural activities. It thus, becomes impossible to improve the rural areas without improving the agricultural sector generally. In the use of the sectorial model of development, the extension responsibility is operated by local extension corporations or shared with extension services in Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) and the ministry of agriculture. The agency itself ensured that the necessary inputs are available to the rural dwellers which are mainly farmers at the appropriate time along with the necessary advisory information. Rural development therefore boils down to improving the living standard

of rural dwellers who are predominately farmers. The Nigerian government has always seen agricultural development as synonymous with rural development. As a result of this mind set, the infrastructural development aspect has been greatly compromised. This aspect especially roads to enhance marketing and inflow of innovations, health facilities, schools, electricity, and other social amenities that will steam rural-urban migration and keep the youths to enhance greater food production, higher income and better standard of living. ‘Agricultural development can boost rural development.’ If the farmers are given all the support they need to enable them generate more income, they will start craving for better living. This new awareness of the need for better living will kindle the spirit of community development in them. If their living standard is not improved through increase income generation, they cannot contribute to development projects considering the fact that the trend now is partnership with beneficiaries in community development interface.

Overview of Agricultural and Rural Development

Agricultural development is seen from development perspectives as the advancement of various agricultural enterprises in crop and animal husbandry; fishery technologies and forestry management periodically, effort are made to develop the agricultural sector through plant and animal improvement technologies, adoption of innovations environmental protection and agricultural programs and sustainability (Ovharhe, 2007). Rural development has often been tied to agricultural development projects as most rural development projects are sponsored or supported by agricultural extension services (Agbamu, 2006). Much effort has been placed on agricultural development which will in essence improve rural communities and *vice versa*. The Nigerian approach to rural development has made it impossible to discuss the issue of rural development without bringing in improvement of agricultural productivity. Various rural development projects have been embarked on by the Nigerian government under the integrated rural development approach. The integrated approach refers to a set of development activities coordinated in such a way as to bring about total improvement in several aspects of rural life. The approach includes the provision of basic amenities such as feeder roads, bridges, cottage industries and portable water supply. The World Bank assisted Agricultural Development Programme was a typical example of the integrated rural development programme. From this, agricultural sector was not excluded, but built into the development model. The Fadama III

Project in Delta State incorporated infrastructural development in the rural areas so as to achieve optimal agricultural development.

Rural-Urban Transformation Scheme

The most common definition applied by international organizations to separate rural and urban regions is that developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The definition distinguishes two hierarchical levels of territorial units - local and regional. At local community level the OECD defined rural areas as communities with a population density below 150 inhabitants per square kilometer. At regional level, the OECD distinguishes larger functional or administrative units by their degree of reality, depending on what share of the region's population lives in rural communities. To facilitate analysis, regions are then grouped into three types:

- Predominantly rural regions: over 50 percent of the population living in rural communities;
- Significantly rural regions: 15 to 50 percent of the population living in rural communities;
- Predominantly urban regions: less than 15 percent of the population living in rural communities (OECD, 2004).

Ovwigho and Ifie (2009) stated that a rural area is an area with very few social and basic amenities and where predominant occupation is agriculture and related income generating activities for example weaving and fishing. In accordance with OECD and Michael (2005) the key indicators used in the differentiation are:

- Size of habitable areas,
- Population density,
- Infrastructural development
- Occupation type,
- Mobility and Culture

Rural Development: What it necessitates

The basic necessities in transforming the rural to urban areas are considered as the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These KPIs are: availability of basic infrastructural facilities such as portable water scheme, electricity, good road network, telecommunication, schools, health care facilities, security networks, industrialization, technological advancement and others.

The ability to integrate these performance indicators into rural areas is referred to as rural community development. This developmental process results in transformation from rural to urban areas (Okoye, 2009). He noted that the integrated rural development selected a set of developmental activities coordinated in such a way as to bring about total improvement in several aspects of rural life and better standard of living. In his findings on a rural areas development survey project, Nwaeze (2015) revealed that 88% of target community members were not aware of government community development programmes (Table 1). This was explained by the researcher as due to the absence or poor dissemination of information by media and community development practitioners in the State. For a meaningful advancement in agriculture, community based organizations (CBOs) must contribute to community development by self-help projects and the attraction of external stakeholders (Uzokwe, Ogbekene and Ovharhe, 2015). Such projects advocated by the authors include bore holes, market stalls, earthen road construction, road maintenance, and construction of drainage channels.

Table 1: Awareness of Government Developmental Programmes in Rural Areas

Options	Respondents	Percentage
Aware	1050	88
Not Aware	150	12
Total	1200	100

Source: Nwaeze, 2015. Rural Development Survey in Delta State.

In Nigeria, the ADP was involved in agricultural development and rural development through extension services by the provision of basic amenities such as feeder roads, bridges, cottage industries, water supply and processing plants for agricultural products. By this contribution, the programme was able to encourage mutual rural urban linkages and thus discourage rural urban migration. Gradually there became a shift from predomination rural life to urban life. These gradual changes transform the rural areas to urban areas. Ovharhe (2013) discovered that 90% of the Delta State Fadama III Project beneficiaries were satisfied with the provision of Rural Community Development projects (provision of borehole water, feeder roads, market stalls, mill houses and agro-innovations). These contributed to agricultural development in those localities.

Role of Rural Development in Agricultural Development

Rural development functions in agricultural development in enhancing the ease of achieving agricultural set goals and targets in any organizations. Rural and agricultural development and equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth are crucial for the global reduction of poverty and hunger. Numerous studies have provided evidence that the impact of economic growth on reducing hunger and poverty depends as much on the nature of the growth (e.g. industrial or rural economy based) as on its scale and speed. For example, a World Bank analysis of data from India, found that growth in rural areas and in the agriculture sector had a much greater impact on reducing poverty than did urban and industrial growth. Other studies that analyzed the relationship between growth and reduction in hunger revealed a similar pattern. These and other examples tend to support the conclusion that economic growth in the agricultural and rural sector has a much greater impact in reducing poverty and hunger in relation to rural community development and industrial growth (OECD,2004).

As observed by Nwaeze (2015), government sponsored rural development projects such as rural feeder roads, portable water supply, and health care centers are not adequately implemented hence no significant impact on the well-being of rural dwellers in most communities. For instance, in the published results by Nwaeze (2015), the distribution of projects in Idheze community (Table 2) school building project ranked first, roads and water provision ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively, agricultural support ranked 4th while electricity provision ranked 6th in the scale of preference and or in satisfaction by the benefitting community.

Table 2: Community Project Distribution

S/N	Project	Respondents	Percentage	Rank (Position)
1	Building of School	90	31.58	1 st
2	Road Construction	80	28.07	2 nd
3	Provision of Water	60	21.05	3 rd
4	Agricultural Support	40	14.04	4 th
5	Skill Acquisition	10	3.51	5 th
6	Electricity Provision	5	1.75	6 th
Total		285	100	

Source: Nwaeze, 2015 (Developmental Projects in Idheze Community, Isoko North LGA)

The implication here in the Nwaeze (2015) findings is that improved education, roads and water projects command top priority which should come first in order to facilitate the development of agriculture. Uzokwe *et al.* (2015) opined that intervention projects from donor agencies and facilitated by community based organizations will eliminate constraints facing agricultural and community development.

Problems and Prospects of Rural Development Projects in relation to Agricultural Development and Extension Work

Over the years several rural developments have been implemented without meeting the goals. In Nigeria, the major problems or constraints to rural development projects include:

- a. **Poor funding:** Most rural development in Nigeria was dependent on foreign bodies as donors and sponsors. According to Eltamidade and Asaolu (2006) the strongest financial base of the ADP sponsored development project was from the World Bank. With the withdrawal of these sponsorship funds, the project could not be continued. Furthermore, Agbamu and Okagbare (2005) asserted that the withdrawal of these sponsorship funds affected extension activities seriously amongst other developmental factors. The country on its own can look into utilization of locally available resources and funds. Looking inwards for funding is also a basic problem.
- b. **Unstable government regimes:** Rural development is hampered by continuous change of government and policies. The discontinuation of rural development programme by incoming unstable government over the years has led to insignificant progress in the development of rural areas in Nigeria (Agbamu, 2006). These policies created by new government do not favour the continuation of projects that are still running. Policies arise in the development of new project agencies which would start up new projects disregarding the existing ones.
- c. **Insufficient time:** Time allotted for projects to run is very limited and most times insufficient to gain the full potentials of the projects. Policy continuation and failed institutionalized rural development agencies. Most of the projects have experienced abortion as new mandates are created time after time to replace existing ones thereby creating ineffectiveness of projects. Time frame for given specific projects have always been underestimated and with poor funding problems. Projects do not end as at when stated creating problem of incompleteness (Mba, 2008).

- d. **Bureaucratic Processes:** In Nigeria, several procedures are passed before in getting a project downstream to the rural areas. Bureaucracy which characterizes government policy implementation result in severe setback to agricultural/rural development projects. Cases of embezzlement of government funds meant for project continuation and completion has been recorded, Okoye (2009).
- e. Over the years Extension work has been viewed as the process whereby the extension worker tries to motivate farmers and to give them the capability with the help of encouragement and ideas to act to solve their acute problems and felt needs. The farmers concerned acquire a better insight into the network of problems and recognize the alternative solutions available. However, the inadequate numbers of extension workers in relation to the needs of farmers constitute to poor agricultural development. (Verlag, 1994).

Prospects of Rural Development Projects

Rural development can be improved. There is every possibility that rural development will receive a boost if individual participation is encouraged in rural development project and programme. Incorporating the consent and participation of the rural dwellers that are in every way affected by the development projects is very necessary to strengthen projects. This would create challenges to rural dwellers in developing and maintaining projects already on ground. To reduce the challenges involved with current developments programmes, Tomiloye (2009), stated that there is need to incorporate knowledge of rural dwellers into programme plans and execution of community development project initiated by project donors. The promotion of several funding sources also goes a long way in sustaining a proper development and ensuring projects completion and performance. This can be achieved by looking inwards to community incomes generating activities and also seeking volunteer services. Non-government organizations can be contacted in aiding development projects. The need arises where agencies in charge may solicit help from the local people. This is achievable if individuals or officers manning the agencies do not undermine the rural dwellers thus incorporating their views and contribution to rural development projects.

Agricultural development has a very high prospect when rural development projects are linked-with feasible sustainable plans encompassing project monitoring, evaluation, maintenance, partnership ventures and articulated exit strategies of project donors.

The Way Forward

Features fostering and transforming rural areas into urban areas are synonymous to features contributing to agricultural development in any typified rural developed settings. The local indicators for communities that are advanced in rural development include the functional presence of social amenities and infrastructure which invariably aid the agricultural development of such areas. The following community development indicators are needed for community development: availability of network communication system, availability of power supply, improved roads networks, functional water scheme, satisfactory health centers, provision of school facilities, creation of skill acquisition/development centers, building of field offices, creation of farm settlement, provision of modern market, availability of banks, presence of agro-technology, agricultural clinics, research centers, establishment of recreation centers, availability of storage facilities and proximity of Police Station for security issues.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Integrated rural development in tandem with agricultural development is the best approach to agricultural development in Delta State, Nigeria. Efforts should be made to reduce the challenges facing rural and agricultural development in the state in order to enhance rural and development in the country. Establishment and renovations of rural infrastructure and provision of agricultural technology and empowerment of extension workers for the sustainability of the agricultural development initiatives in the State should be encouraged. Rural development collaborating with agricultural development is one of the perspectives of changing rural settings.

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