



APPROACHES TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA (ADP, DFRRI AND SCHOOL TO LAND)

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the approaches to rural development in Nigeria, such as Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), Directorate of Food, Rural Roads and Infrastructure (DFRRI) and School-To-Land. The study investigates how the stated rural development approaches have achieved their objectives and improved the standard of living of rural dwellers. It was discovered, among others, that Rural areas are large in population and area, and they are characterized by traditional practices, hopelessness and fatalism, very poor, and lack the basic necessities that make life worthwhile (lack motorable roads, medical facilities, schools are almost absent because where they even exist, there are inadequate teachers, lack of furniture with poor attendance records and they predominantly practice subsistence agriculture). The study recommends that monitoring and evaluation should be fully integrated into the project. While target beneficiaries should form the cardinal point of the evaluation process, the gains and outcomes in both social and economic perspectives should form the principal indicators in the process of evaluation.

Keywords: Approaches, Rural Development, Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), Directorate of Food, Rural Roads and Infrastructure (DFRRI) and School-To-Land.

INTRODUCTION

“Rural Areas” are the origin of most persons in government especially, those in the third world. Paradoxically, those are areas which are mostly discounted in the development calculus of those public dramatis personae who rule the state. What inform those who come from rural areas to forget the rural areas when they are embarking on development interventions? The rural areas are those areas where the people produce food which sustain the population in the cities. It has been said that in the third world, about 70% of the population reside in the rural areas. It has been said that about 90% of both the capital and recurrent expenditure of government in the third world are spent in the urban oriented development to the neglect of the rural areas of the countryside.

Rural development is a term that occurs very often in the development paradigm of the third world countries and Nigeria specifically. Its major aim is to improve the living standard of the impoverished rural inhabitants (Ivolga, 2010).

Consequently, state policy in the sphere of agriculture should be preceded from sustainable development of rural areas, based on economic, social and environmental approaches. One of the major threats to effective state policies in rural areas is the contrast between attractions of city life and negative rural life.

There are many approaches to the study of rural development planning in Nigeria, but for the sake of clarity only few will be discussed (ADP, DFRRRI and School to land).

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (ADP)

The ADP approach was said to have been originally designed to tackle the problem of poverty. The economic development in the rural areas of the country had been promoted through a strategy which focused on the contribution of improved technologies for food crops, enhanced delivery system for agricultural extension and input supply and improved infrastructure.

Agricultural development programme (ADP) was initiated in Nigeria in 1974 with the establishment of the first three projects in the Northern part of the country. These include: Funtua, Gusau and Gombe. The chosen project regions were agro-ecologically favourable areas in the northern part of Nigeria. They were located in the domain of several Local Government councils (LGCs) of Bauchi, Gombe, IKaduna and Sokoto States (Idrisa 2010). The apparent success of these early projects prompted both the Federal Government of Nigeria and the World Bank to quickly replicate the agricultural Development Project out of which Ekiti State Agricultural Development Programme was created. A federal entity titled Agricultural Projects Monitoring Evaluation and planning Unit in 1475, reviewed in recent times (Akinbamowo, 2013) was created to support the Agricultural Development Programme projects.

OBJECTIVES OF THE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Basically, all Agricultural Development Programmes have one objective in common. It is to increase food production and farm incomes for the majority of the rural households in the defined project regions, thus improving the standard of living and welfare of the farming population, with the hope of reducing abject poverty.

However these objectives are as follows:

1. To provide strategic public support for land development which had been a bottleneck obstructing land development.
2. Promote and support large farm holdings which would be economic scale.
3. Promote and support optimum utilization of the rural land resources for accelerated production of food.
4. To support village settlement to encourage the creation of agricultural output at a high level.
5. To provide employment for rural dwellers in the projects.
6. To facilitate cost effectiveness of agricultural production.

DIRECTORATE OF FOOD, RURAL ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE (DFRRI)

DFRRI was established in 1986 by the Babangida Military Administration with a view to transforming Nigeria's rural area through the provision of good roads, water and electricity supply and as such improve the lots of the rural peasants its establishment was booked up by Decree No. 4 of 1987: The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure is of the belief that a well designed and properly articulated programme of integrated rural development is nothing if it cannot be translated into concrete realities on the ground for the benefit of rural communities.

PURPOSE/FUNCTIONS OF DERRI

Outside specific functions discharged by specific individual officers in the Directorate, DFRRI as an organization has some specific existence. It is conceived as a development machine to turn the rural society into an urban sort through rapid distribution of social amenities. For short, it is concerned with providing the rural people with the basic infrastructure needed for development.

The inception of DFRRI concentrated its functions and emphasis on rural roads to open up those areas and in such manner, boost food production. However, DFRRI is also involved in the area of food and agricultural activities, rural industrialization, rural technology and resource development and exploitation which it tagged "Promotion of productive activities".

It is pertinent to point out that DERRI at any state do not in itself carry out any project. Projects to be executed are contracted out to allied agencies associated with rural development such as Local Government Councils, Rural Development Authorities (RDA), State Rural Electrification Boards. They execute same on behalf of DERRI while DERRI provide the cost and supervise such projects using its engineers and co-coordinators. DFRRI determines the extent of satisfactory completion of such projects.

Therefore, a careful study of the activities of DFRRI shows that its functions can be itemized as follows:

- i. To work in close collaboration with the State governments to reach the various communities in each of the Local government areas in Nigeria.
- ii. To provide a framework for grassroots social mobilization of the people.
- iii. To mount virile programme of development, provide monitoring socio-economic objectives.
 1. To improve the quality of life and standard of living of the people in the rural areas by;
 - a. Substantially improving the quality, values and nutritional balance of their food intake;

- b. Raising the quality of rural housing as well as the general living and working environment in the rural areas.
 - c. Improving the health conditions of the rural population.
 - d. Creating greater opportunities for employment and human development.
 - e. Making it possible to have a progressively wider rank and variety of goods and services to be produced and consumed by the rural people themselves as well as for exchange.
2. It is also DFRRI's assignment to use enormous resources of the rural areas to lay a solid foundation for the society, Socio-cultural, political and economic growth and development of the nation.
 3. To make as a matter of reality, the rural area more productive and less vulnerable to hazards, poverty and exploitation and to give them a mutually beneficial linkage with other parts of the national economy.
 4. To ensure a deeply rooted and self-sustaining development process based on effectively mobilized mass participation (Koinyan, 1987:1546).

The above functions of the DFRRI were conceived from its study and understanding of the problem of the Nigeria society in general and rural development in particular.

To the Directorate, problems of rural development in Nigeria can be said to include the following;

1. A mono-culture, falling oil prices and huge foreign debts
2. A rapid rising population declining per capital income, a pattern of income distribution with the rich at heart, stunted levels of production instable food supplies, inflation.
3. Rural-urban migration, unemployment and high labour costs, raw material shortages, a very weak and in-efficient bureaucracy and a weak private sector, technological backwardness, a corrupt political system which consumes instead of producing, over dependence on government, urban biased development which regulates rural or grassroots participation to the background (Koinyan, 1987).

SCHOOL TO LAND

This programme was established in 1984, by the then Administrator of Rivers State Police Commissioner Fedelis Oyakhilome, he took a giant step to transform Rivers state as the food basket of the Nigerian nation by embarking on the school-to-land programme. It was not only meant to be a food basket but ostensibly to be a training ground for young secondary school leavers to imbibe the essence of farming and self-employment.

Less than ten years of the inception of the school to land programme, it encountered many political, economic and social problems that led to its demise. Problems in the fold of lack of continuity due to different government that took the mantle of government after the tenure of PC Fedelis Oyakhilome; poor accountability on the sale of farm products and the hydra-headed problems of bureaucracy because the then scheme, though it was orchestrated that it was independent, the interference and interruption by officials of the State Ministry of Agriculture was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

Furthermore, none of the then one hundred and fifty (150) young farmers that were trained at Iriebe and Banu farms took farming as a means of livelihood thereby defeating the very essence of the school-to-land farming scheme.

Hence, it is very interesting or surprising to bear the immediate past Governor of Rivers State Rt. Hon Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi orchestrating the need and essence of introducing the model of Songhai farms in Porto Novo, Benin Republic to Rivers State. The Songhai farm has the same objectives as the school-to-land programme; the exception being that it is a private organization that is in partnership with international bodies mainly to train young men and women on the need of self-reliance, self-employment and championing the essence of farming so that the nations of Africa can be self-reliant in food production.

The then Governor of Rivers State sent one hundred and ten (110) secondary school graduates to Porto Novo to learn the art of modern farming: Modern farming in the fold of livestock, afro-forestry, poultry, aqua-culture and market gardens to mention but a few. The first batch of trainees was in Benin Republic for one and half years for the training out of which fifty (50) graduates are presently in Bunu Songhai farms in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State Practicing what they learnt.

CONCLUSION

It is no longer news that Nigerian society is segregated in such a way that the urban sector is controlled by small influential group of elites who are better-off economically and more educated and control the industries as well as hold key government positions. On the other hand, the sub-urban segment is made of the slums and areas inhabited by the illiterate or half educated citizens forced out of the rural sectors by the pull and push factors, particularly, harsh realities of economic deprivation.

Rural areas are large in population and area. They are characterized by traditional practices, hopelessness and fatalism, very poor, and lack the basic necessities that make life worthwhile (lack motorable roads, medical facilities, schools are almost absent because where they even exist, there are inadequate teachers, lack of furniture with poor attendance records and they predominantly practice subsistence agriculture).

In the process, monitoring and evaluation should be fully integrated into the project. While target beneficiaries should form the cardinal point of the evaluation process, the gains and outcomes in both social and economic perspectives should form the principal indicators in the process of evaluation. No matter what happens or befall Nigerian agriculture today, it will turn out to be the savior of the nation's social and economic doldrums in the nearest future.

Finally, policy direction in rural and agricultural development programmes should be integrated with target beneficiaries seen as active rather than passive participants. Hence, the development of both human and economic capital in the face of social and cultural challenges should have human face and sympathy.

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