



Effects of transformation in Nigerian rural communities

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Abstract

The paper explores the effects of transformation on Nigerian rural communities. This paper emphasizes the need for a paradigm shift in the transformation of rural communities in Nigeria. The "transformational space" between urban and rural areas in Nigeria is very broad (in terms of the provision of economic development, quality of life, access to opportunities, amenities, social services, and standard of living). The rural areas are usually abhorrently mistreated as far as development projects and infrastructures are concerned. The initiatives that have been put in place in order to develop rural communities in Nigeria are diverse and multifarious. This paper therefore considered these policies and discovered that rural development programmes exist on paper but their impacts are not being felt by the supposed beneficiaries. Conceptual clarifications included rural areas; rural transformation; development objectives of rural areas; components of rural transformation policy; and challenges of rural transformation. It identified various strategies for enhancing rural transformation. It was recommended that more concerted efforts should be made toward the development of rural areas. These should include an increase in budget allocation, effective policy implementation, and completion.

Keywords: effects, transformation, rural communities, rural transformation

Introduction

After independence, the majority of countries neglected transformation in rural communities and concentrated on the development of urban areas, which to them are the first points of contact with any nation. It was only in the wake of outbreaks of famine and various diseases which challenged the living conditions of 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 seedlings, irrigation, and mechanization (Lacroix, 2011)^[15]. The Asian Development Bank (2014) asserted that transformation in rural communities has become one of the major aims of various assistance/intervention programmes of both individual developing countries and multilateral institutions/donors. Since Nigeria gained political independence in 1960, there has been a great impetus attached to rural community development as a factor that advances the overall socio-economic development of the developing countries of the world outside the 'Development Administration..

It is this reality, as highlighted by Alege (2015)^[3] that has made the government at different times set up various programmes and specialized credit institutions in an attempt to transform and develop rural areas in all their ramifications, 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 still on-going, some are moribund and others have gone with the regimes that initiated them. Ibietan and Oghator (2013)^[10] noted that successive governments have indicated a desire to transform the country, be it in terms of the provision of infrastructure, human capacity development, or even in the realm of social and political development. In this way, Nigeria has experimented with several development plans from the pre-independence era till date, yet the needed transformation has continued to elude its citizenry in spite of the robust plans.

Conceptual Clarifications

Some concepts are explained below:

Rural Area

The word "rural" connotes a place with an agricultural orientation; the houses are farm houses, barns, sheds, and other structures of similar purposes. In the opinion of Olisa and Obiukwu (2012)^[19], the population is the main characteristic that differentiates rural from urban areas, especially in developing countries. In this regard, in Nigeria, an area with a population of 20,000 people or below is classified as a rural area. However, this is not adequate to explain a rural area. Therefore, according to Olisa and Obiukwu (2012)^[19], 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 areas in Nigeria, basic infrastructure, where it exists at all, is too inadequate for meaningful development.

The concept of rural areas varies from place to place. Olisa and Obiukwu (2012)^[19] opined that it is the population that is the major characteristic differentiating rural from urban areas. For instance, in Japan, rural areas are defined based on population density, indicating an area "other than an area with 5,000 people, which consists of each district with a population density of 4,000 per square meter. However, since the definition cannot be applied to other less populated countries, rural areas are also described as areas where a majority of the residents are engaged in agriculture (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2002). Other factors considered in defining rural areas include occupation types, settlement patterns, and levels of economic, social, and political participation. Harris (2012) stated that rural areas refer to places that have a relatively low population density, where agriculture dominates the landscape and economy, the provision of social services is difficult, and where

transport and communication need to cover relatively large distances.

Nenpomingyi and Gowon (2019) ^[18] defined rural areas in Nigeria as centers of deprivation where life is devoid of opportunities and choices and an environment lacking in infrastructural facilities including roads, water supply and sanitation, energy communication facilities etc. Oruonye (2013) ^[20] asserted that major characteristics of rural areas in Nigeria are: large lands for agriculture; low population density; little or no technology; a large number of small-scale producers; labor-intensive and subsistence farming; high poverty levels; and a predominantly illiterate population. Scholars have also conceptualized rural areas in different perspectives. Modernization theorists view rural areas as being traditional and primitive.

According to them, the major obstacles to progress and development in rural areas are internal, most especially their adherence to or affiliation with culture. For instance, Lipset (2017) ^[16] argued that economic conditions in rural and traditional areas are heavily determined by the cultural and social values of that given society. They stated that while modernization might bring violent or radical changes, it is worth the price. 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 thousand naira annually. They are poorly served by almost all public amenities, and they generally show considerable resistance to change in any form.

Rural Transformation

Transformation is an inevitable part of human life. Through the ages, our society has faced economic, infrastructural, and cultural transformation that has altered our lifestyle for the better or worse. Human economic systems may experience a number of deviations and departures in the form of disturbances (temporary disorder), perturbation (repeated divergence), deformation (loss of self-sustainability), transformation (revolution, conversion) or renewal (rebirth, renaissance). Transformation in economics refers to a unidirectional and irrevocable change in prevailing economic activity. While definitions vary, rural transformation is recognized as a process impacting on development with or without interventions. In other words, it constitutes the dynamics in the rural space and does not by itself provide directions for sustainable development.

Rural transformation is a process of comprehensive societal change whereby rural societies diversify their economies and reduce their reliance on agriculture, becoming dependent on distant places to trade and to acquire goods, services, and ideas. In many low and middle-income countries, rural areas are undergoing fundamental processes of change that affect not only their economic structure but also their social, cultural, and political fabric. Historically, rural transformation is often compared to the economic transformation from agricultural to industrial economies, witnessed in many parts of Europe in the 19th century and across Asia and Latin America in the 20th century. However, this concept is insufficient to describe the various concurrent and intertwining dynamics that impact the rural space of developing countries today, as well as the more

complex and rapidly changing framework conditions in which they are embedded.

Rural transformation is defined as a process of change in rural areas, which depends on many factors and dynamics. The challenges and opportunities of rural transformation derive from rural-urban linkages and depend on many sectors inside and outside of agriculture. Rural transformation could be seen as a development process embracing the efforts of individuals, self-help groups, non-governmental and governmental organizations, collective thinking, collective action, and participation. Each of these groups identified with different roles towards increasing the social and economic well-being of the people and the advancement of the nation's growth, and to make the efforts of these groups effective and acceptable, the people's identified felt needs must be priority projects (Dube, 2016) ^[6]

Rural transformation operates through the enlistment and organization of self-help and cooperative efforts on the part of the community, but usually with technical assistance from government and voluntary agencies. Akin (2018) ^[2] sees rural transformation as the collective activities that meet basic economic and social needs. This implies that a community determines its own future and must do this collectively if it is to realize that vision of its future. No outside body, however benevolent and generous, can do this for the community. It is not a matter of money or of sharing a national cake. It is a matter of leadership to foster the right attitude, promote strong work ethics and inculcate the social virtues of hard work, diligence, and perseverance in changing the circumstances of one's life for the better.

Jose (2016) ^[14] defined rural transformation as a process of social action in which people of the rural community organize themselves for planning and action, define their individual and common goals to meet their needs, solve their problems, and supplement these resources when necessary with services from government and non-governmental agencies outside the community.

Igbozurike (2017) defined rural transformation as a regional resource mobilization system in which the conceptual initiatives and responsibility rest with the occupants of the region concerned. The term is also seen as an educational process and activities in rural communities that embody the principle of self-help. In developed countries, e.g., the United Kingdom, a professional expert is employed by the local education authority to assist and promote the activity. This idea is echoed by Bail (2014) ^[5], who saw community development as the method by which people in villages are involved in helping to improve their own economic and social working conditions and thereby become effective working groups in programmes of their national development. In other words, it emanates from a mutual agreement among a group of people to their cooperative efforts to embark on programmes that would improve their socio-economic lives.

Bail (2014) ^[5] is of the view that rural development is an educational process that seeks to create improved opportunities for local people to satisfy their human, economic, social, and psychological needs. This view was supported by Brainwell and Baker (2015) when they said that rural transformation is an educational process. It is not a better road, a better bridge, portable water, or effective sanitation; it is something of the spirit more than the material. It must reach deep into the cultural pattern of the

people. It is not a temporary physical constitution. It is a building within the mind of man, not a re-creation centre in the middle of the field. The emphasis here is on the internalization of the culture. Ugboh (2014) ^[22] saw rural transformation as a process of people learning how to help themselves attain an improved standard of living by building better communities, taking one step at a time.

The effectiveness of a rural development programme will depend to a large extent on whether or not the government encourages local planning and participation in the light of technical possibilities brought to their attention. If an atmosphere is created in which the citizens feel it is a duty and privilege to contribute their own quota actively to the development of their community, much more is likely to be accomplished than is otherwise possible. Rural development helps the people of a rural community organize themselves for planning and action, define their common and individual needs, execute these plans with a maximum reliance upon community resources, and supplement these resources when necessary with services and materials from government and non-governmental agencies. Nevertheless, it is very silent on what should be the primary objective or goal of rural development whether it is cooperative work or the development of self-determination.

Every rural community development programme or project must have its roots in the community, ensuring active involvement and participation of the people from the execution stage. It is and must be a bottom-up development process. The goals of rural development should be to increase rural dwellers' self-sufficiency and living standards. It enables the people, through group action, to become competent to control their living conditions. It is a process of not only increasing the level of per-capita income in the rural sector but also improving the standard of living of the rural population (Fakoya, Apantaku & Oyesola, 2011) ^[7].

The accessibility and delivery of essential infrastructures such as good roads determine the rapid growth of rural economies. The importance of road infrastructure to the economy in certain areas has been emphasized, specifically in rapidly developing areas (Na, Han & Yoon, 2013) ^[17]. The authors also examined the impact of land transport infrastructure development on Malaysia's economic growth and found that investments in land transport infrastructure have a significant impact on the country's long-term economic growth. The study also emphasized the significance of infrastructure development in thriving several important sectors in the country, including manufacturing, service, international trade, production, and agriculture. This shows that the development of basic infrastructure like road infrastructure is essential in order to increase the rural communities' well-being through the provision of amenities for community use (Yilmaz, Dasedmir, Admis & Lise, 2010).

The complexity of the rural transformation process calls for multi-layered governance and new forms of technical and financial assistance. The international debate on the structural and political changes in rural areas is vivid and ongoing. There are many international working groups and forums, with different constituencies and mandates that explore the central and unifying role rural transformation plays in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

Agriculture: A Driving Force for Rural Transformation

The agricultural population includes all people who rely on agriculture, hunting, fishing, and forestry for a living. It comprises all people economically active in agriculture as well as their nonworking dependents (Jacobson, 2006). With a total of over 1 billion people employed in the sector, agriculture is the second greatest source of employment worldwide after services and occupies the greatest portion of the rural workforce. With over 700 million agricultural workers, Asia accounted for more than 70 % of the world total, and sub-Saharan Africa accounted for almost 20 %. With 510 million and 276 million people engaged in agriculture, respectively,

The trends in the agricultural population do not show a clear sub-regional picture. Although the trend is negative in almost all countries, the extent to which populations become less involved in agriculture differs greatly between countries within all sub-regions. There are three types of countries: (1) those that already had a low proportion of their population engaged in agriculture in 1950 (e.g., the United States, Australia, and Northern Europe); (2) those that experienced rapid de-agrarian nations in recent decades (e.g., North Africa, Brazil, and Nigeria); and (3) those that remain primarily agricultural (East Africa, parts of West Africa, and some Southeast Asian countries). From an economic perspective, it is usually a good sign when the proportion of the population involved in agriculture decreases (World Bank 2007).

Development Objectives of Rural Areas

When acquiring an understanding of rural development approaches and strategies, it is essential to acquire an efficient understanding of areas in rural communities that are in a backward and underdeveloped state and that need to be improved. When individuals are involved in the implementation of strategies and approaches, then they need to be aware of the major objectives of rural individuals (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019).

1. Improvement of Economic Capabilities

In order to bring about improvements in living conditions and overall quality of life, it is necessary to generate a source of income. In rural areas, agriculture and farming practices are stated as the major occupations of the individuals. Apart from these, they are engaged in the production and manufacturing of handicrafts, silk weaving, pottery making, and so forth (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019) ^[18]. Therefore, it can be stated that involvement in employment opportunities and occupations is the major objective of not only individuals residing in urban communities but also rural individuals. In the agriculture sector, strategies need to focus on bringing about improvements in agricultural productivity and marketing of agricultural products. It is vital for farmers and agricultural labourers to put into operation innovative and scientific methods to augment production. Agricultural income can be increased through the implementation of two comprehensive methods. These are stabilizing the prices of agricultural products and intermediary exploitation and improving agricultural productivity and infrastructure (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019) ^[18].

To bring about improvements in agricultural productivity, one gets involved in the production of multiple crops by making use of advanced agricultural techniques. The

introduction of modern irrigation methods is regarded as one of the strategies for improving agricultural infrastructure. The main aspects that need to be taken into consideration to improve agricultural productivity are: the development of small-irrigation systems, i.e. construction of irrigation systems and development of water user associations; capacity building for agricultural extension workers, i.e. improvement of cultivation techniques, improvements in the production of crops and vegetables, and agroforestry; empowerment of community-based activities for farming, i.e. organization of shipping and distributive co-operatives and rice banks; and comprehensive rural and agricultural development, i.e. integrated projects with the development of small-scale irrigation, capacity building for the agricultural workers and strengthening of the community-based activities for farming. The improvements made in these areas would make an effective contribution towards augmenting productivity and profitability through engagement in agriculture and farming practices (Nenpominyi & Gowon, 2019)^[18].

2. Improvement of Human Capabilities

When improvement of human capabilities is taken into consideration, then the emphasis is put upon one's health conditions and educational levels. In rural communities, the health conditions of individuals are regarded to be in a deprived state. If the individuals were experiencing health problems or illnesses, then they would certainly experience problems in getting involved in any tasks or activities. Therefore, improvements need to be initiated in rural communities, and bringing about developments in health care and medical facilities is regarded to be of major significance. In rural communities, health care and medical centres are not in a well-developed state. Individuals, in most cases, are required to migrate to urban areas to obtain medical treatment. When elderly individuals or other individuals within the family experience illnesses, then the other family members are required to leave work and take care of the ailing members. Hence, due to this, they experienced a decline in productivity. Therefore, the augmentation of medical and healthcare centers is crucial for rural development (Idris, 2011)^[9].

For the purpose of generating income, it is vital to bring about improvements in educational standards. Literacy skills enable individuals to read manuals on agricultural techniques and equipment, thus leading to an increase in agricultural productivity. When individuals possess basic literacy skills, they can easily acquire information in terms of policies, measures, and programs that have been put into operation, leading to their well-being (Oruonye, 2013)^[20]. Furthermore, they are able to carry out various tasks and activities in a manageable manner, including the implementation of household responsibilities, health care, diet and nutrition, child development, and so forth. When they are engaged in the production processes, then they will be able to acquire satisfactory information in terms of marketing strategies and approaches and be able to enhance productivity and profitability. In rural communities, the education system is not in a well-developed state and a major cause of this is inadequate financial resources. To bring about improvements in educational standards in rural communities, it is necessary to recruit skilled and qualified teachers, enhance teaching-learning methods and

instructional strategies, improve infrastructure, and improve overall school environmental conditions (Jega, 2011).

3. Improvement of Protective Capabilities

Protective capabilities refer to the capabilities of individuals to protect themselves from various problems and difficulties. These are particularly the ones that prove to be impediments in the course of their progression. These problems are poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment, natural disasters, crime, and violence (Jega, 2011)^[13]. In rural communities, when there are occurrences of natural calamities and disasters, then rural individuals are required to experience detrimental effects to a major extent. The cultivated land gets easily damaged by floods, erosion, earthquakes, etc. Rural individuals who are residing in conditions of poverty do not possess adequate resources to sustain their living conditions sufficiently. Therefore, it is vital for them to be aware of the measures and strategies that are needed to preserve the natural environmental conditions and their well-being. The protection of forests is not only effectual in the alleviation of natural disasters, such as floods, but also protects land from topsoil erosion and generates awareness in terms of financial management, hygiene, and sanitation (Yahaya, 2019).

4. Improvement of Political Capabilities

Political capabilities are the capabilities that facilitate the participation of individuals in policy-making and in the making of decisions on an independent basis in situations where human rights are guaranteed. The rural development approaches have the main objective of making the development plans correspond to the various conditions of the rural communities and implementing the projects through community participation. Development assistance that responds quickly to local needs and requirements must work in collaboration and integration with governments. For this reason, decentralization is regarded as an important factor in local community development. Appropriate decentralization measures are required in rural development activities. The major activities include capacity building of the central governments and improvements in laws and financial management for decentralization. The rural development projects should be consistent with the local government's development plans. If there are differences, then impediments would take place in the achievement of the desired objectives.

Components of Rural Transformation Policy

The policies that are formulated to bring about rural development are required to incorporate the components that have been stated as follows:

1. The individual and their environment

The first component is the individual. Individuals need to develop the skills and abilities to make effective use of the resources that the natural environmental conditions are providing. On the other hand, individuals are required to generate awareness in terms of various strategies and approaches that are required for the preservation of the environment. Curbing various forms of pollution is regarded to be of utmost significance. Rural individuals need to be aware of various strategies and methods for keeping the water bodies and environmental conditions clean. Furthermore, they should be aware of making effective use of resources to improve their living conditions.

2. Ecological Settings

The second component focuses on ecological settings. Ecological setting refers to the major biophysical characteristics at multiple scales that have a long-term influence on the composition, structure, and function of a specific ecosystem and serve to describe and distinguish it ecologically. The major aspects that need to be taken into account in the case of ecological settings are wetness, soil depth, temperature, solar exposure, and wind exposure which define the ecological characteristics (Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System, n.d.). It is vital for rural individuals to possess adequate information in terms of these traits, particularly when they are engaged in agriculture and farming practices.

3. Technology

The third component of rural development is making use of technology. Rural individuals have recognized the significance of technology. They are aware that making use of technical methods would make their tasks and activities manageable. In their present existence, they are making use of technical methods in the agriculture sector, farming practices, and the production, and manufacturing of goods (Archewe, 2014). In addition to the use of technology in the implementation of tasks and activities, individuals are also making use of it in the form of mobile phones and computers to augment their knowledge and information. The elderly, homemakers; and homemakers usually make use of it for leisure and recreational purposes.

4. Infrastructure

The development of infrastructure is integral to the development of rural areas. The infrastructural facilities that need to be developed in rural communities are roads, transportation, communications, power supplies, water supplies, public services, broadcasting, and telecommunications (Lacroix, 2011) ^[15]. In rural households, individuals experience a shortage of power supplies and water supplies. They are required to fetch water from the wells or water bodies located nearby. The conditions of roads and modes of transportation are not in a well-developed state, which is imposing problems for individuals in transferring from one place to another. Therefore, developments made in infrastructural facilities are integral to rural development.

5. Self-Reliance

When focusing on rural development, the development of individuals is regarded to be of the utmost significance. The rural people are mostly illiterate and unaware. They reside in conditions of poverty and backwardness and possess traditional viewpoints and perspectives. Their lives are primarily based on their perspectives and viewpoints. In order to promote their well-being, it is necessary to promote self-reliance among individuals. This can be brought about through the mobilization of resources, local initiatives, and participation of individuals in various tasks and activities, which may be social, political, cultural, economic, or religious (Otigba, 2013).

In rural communities, the establishment of law and order enables individuals to organize tasks and activities in accordance with the rules and policies. Law and order refer to the maintenance of peace and tranquility, which the citizens are required to put into operation by obeying the law of the land.

Education is regarded as the primary tool that lays the groundwork for individuals to progress in all areas and improve their overall quality of life (Otigba, 2013). In rural communities, the education system is not in a well-developed state. In schools, teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies are not put into practice in an effective manner. There is a lack of infrastructure, facilities, and amenities. There is also a shortage of qualified and experienced teachers. Measures need to be formulated to bring about improvements in these aspects, so there would be an increase in the enrolment of students in schools. Acquisition of education would enable individuals to augment their skills and abilities so they could carry out tasks and activities to sustain their living conditions in an appropriate manner.

Challenges of Rural Transformation

Even though the democratic government in Nigeria is expected to offer more opportunities for transformation, most of the populace, particularly in rural areas, suffer from abject poverty and deprivation. Despite several policies of rural development instituted in Nigeria, the condition of poverty has not changed much. The report by the Poverty World Clock in 2018 revealed that Nigeria has the largest extreme poverty population in the world, making it the poverty capital of the world.

Nenpomyi and Gowon (2019) ^[18] observed most rural programs in Nigeria have failed because they are approached from the top. The programs are formulated and implemented by government officials in league with foreign interests, for the neglected peasant producers who are knowledgeable in the process of rural production. Consequently, due to the non-involvement of the rural producers in the process of their development, these development programs do not record success. The contention here is that the interests of those who control the machinery of government do not often correspond to those of the rural poor. As a result, the various attempts to aim at transforming rural areas have failed to yield positive results. The failure of the rural development programs can therefore be attributed to the glaring contradictions in the activities of the government saddled with the responsibility of implementing the programs and the inability to reconcile the interests and needs of the local people. This, perhaps, further compounds the persistent problem of poverty and squalor in the rural communities in Nigeria and constitutes a barrier to rural development. Rural development has the prospect of succeeding when the people are willing to accept and participate in initiating and implementing the policies and programs of the government.

Findings culled from the Nigeria Rural Development Strategy Report also (2006) revealed two broad dimensions of the present rural condition in Nigeria, namely: Rural Mass Deprivation and Individual Deprivation. A lack of socioeconomic infrastructures feeder roads, agricultural inputs, credit facilities, health and education centers, sanitation facilities, water supply, and functional markets, manifests Rural Mass Deprivation. On the other hand, individual deprivation involves the inability of rural dwellers to secure employment due to their lack of requisite skills. These two dimensions of rural poverty imply a lack of options and opportunities for the majority of the rural population and, subsequently, the inability to live decent,

healthy, and creative lives consistent with those living in urban areas.

Corruption and mismanagement of resources at different levels of government in Nigeria have also greatly hindered the effective utilization of resources that would have been channeled toward transforming the rural areas. Despite being an exporter of crude oil for about four decades and receiving assistance from international organizations, the living condition of the rural people and general populace in Nigeria has not improved because of the endemic condition in the country.

The Transparency International report for 2015^[21] indicated that 40 of the 46 African countries covered have a serious corruption problem, and Nigeria was listed among the 40 countries grappling with high levels of corruption (TI, 2015; Adelabu, Mwangi & Ndiri, 2018). Propelled by increasing famine, desertification, and loss of grazing settlements, the rural areas in Nigeria have also recently been faced with the challenges of intra-tribal conflicts and farmers' and herders' conflicts, which have led to the loss of lives and properties and produced several internally displaced people, further impoverishing the rural areas. A report by Amnesty International in 2018 indicated that 2,075 deaths occurred in 2018 alone in Nigeria due to farmer-herder clashes.

These conflicts also have a direct impact on market development and economic growth by eroding trust among market actors, destroying productive assets, preventing trade, and deterring investments. A study by the Mercy Corps highlighted the farmers' and pastoralists' conflicts in Nigeria, which is mostly in the rural areas, could be costing Nigeria about \$13.7 billion annually (Punch, October 20, 2016) Apart from economic losses, there is also a risk of the farmer-herder conflicts mixing with the volatile political situation in the country and triggering new types of conflicts.

The incapability of the local governments to meet the needs of the grassroots or rural areas has also compounded the challenges of rural development in Nigeria. As the third tier of government, the local government is the closest to the people, with the responsibility of meeting the peculiar needs of the rural areas and bringing them closer to the government (Jega, 2011) ^[13]. However, the local government in Nigeria operates under the shadow of the state government with no political autonomy or control over its resources. Thus, the local government areas are confronted with limited resources, inadequate workers, uncertainty of tenure of office, lack of participation of the local people, and general indiscipline among local government workers (Orunoye, 2013). The local government authorities in Nigeria have operated in a general state of despondency and political disenchantment, particularly since their activities are secluded from the watch of the media and non-governmental organizations (Jega, 2011)^[13]. These challenges have alienated the rural areas from enjoying the social delivery expected from the local government.

Strategies for Enhancing Rural Transformation

The strategies for rural development are based on rural development approaches.

1. The Multi-purpose Strategy

It was regarded as an educational and organizational process. Since then, it is also aimed at bringing about

changes in the practices and procedures that proved to be barriers in the course of implementation of desired objectives (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019) ^[18]. The major objective was a social and economic improvement. The rationale of the approach was that all aspects were linked with each other. The activities of CPD included agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation, water resources, cooperation, village and small-scale industries, health and sanitation, communication, housing and so forth. Therefore, it can be stated that the development of welfare and livelihood opportunities was one of the primary objectives of the multi-purpose strategy (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019) ^[18].

2. Growth Oriented Strategy

The growth oriented strategy was based on rural individuals. Despite living in poverty and backwardness, rural residents have sharp minds and can make sound decisions (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019) ^[18]. In order to participate in effective decision-making processes, they should be provided with rights and opportunities. The main objective of rural individuals is to enhance their living conditions, and to achieve this purpose, they are looking for employment and income-generating opportunities. Therefore, it can be stated that the implementation of opportunities that would promote the growth of individuals in an efficacious manner are referred to as growth-oriented strategies. The agricultural sector is the major area of employment and livelihood opportunities for rural individuals. Therefore, the implementation of programs, such as the Intensive Agriculture District Program (IADP), Intensive Cattle Development Program (ICDP) and High Yielding Varieties Program (HYVP), was launched (Olanrewaju, 2016).

3. Target Group Strategy

In the target group strategy, a particular group is undertaken and researched upon. Normally, as in this case, strategies for rural development are being researched. Therefore, conditions may be analysed for small and marginal farmers as well as wealthier farmers. The conditions of small and marginal farmers are not in an improved state. They are residing in conditions of poverty and backwardness and, therefore, are unaware of modern and innovative strategies and methods that are considered essential to augment production. Instead, they are making use of traditional farming practices and methods in the production processes (Olanrewaju, 2016).

4. Area Development Strategy

Under the area development strategy, emphasis has been put upon the development of backward regions. This strategy presumes that the growth centres have a geographical spread effect such that the regions that are deficient in terms of resources, infrastructure, etc., need to be adequately developed. The major programs that have been formulated under this strategy are the Drought Prone Area Program (DPAP), Tribal Area Development Program (TADP), Command Area Development Program (CADP), Hill Area Development Program, and so forth. The tribal population is scattered throughout the country (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019) ^[18]. They mostly reside in hilly and mountainous regions. They are dependent upon the natural environmental conditions for their survival. Therefore, it is vital to implement measures and formulate strategies that are focused on the development of tribal areas. In order to

generate the desired outcomes, it is necessary to allocate the resources in an appropriate manner, so the development of backward regions can promote the well-being of the individuals.

The spatial planning strategy requires the implementation of special programs in their respective locations, the induction of production plans, employment programs, and the provision of basic needs to the rural population. In order to achieve these objectives, the programs and strategies need to be rural-oriented. In the fifth five-year plan, multi-level planning is the planning that was focused upon to a large extent (Olanrewaju, 2016). In addition to multi-level planning, it was vital for the individuals to generate awareness in terms of technological, socio-political, and administrative functions. As it is apparent, when improvements need to be made or when transformations need to be brought about, then emphasis needs to be put upon the implementation of modern and innovative methods. In some of the areas, when there is a lack of materials and resources, it would lead to hindrances in the course of achieving the desired objectives. On the other hand, the shortage of techniques needs to be analyzed and plans should be efficiently put into operation to promote the welfare and goodwill of the rural population.

5. An integrated or holistic strategy

This strategy has been formulated, taking into consideration the perspective that development should be an integrated one. There is an integration in the development of areas, regions, infrastructure, education, employment opportunities, human resources, training, skills development programs, and the overall quality of lives of rural individuals (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019) [18]. There are connections established between all the programs, provided they are infrastructural development programs, human resources development programs, sectorial development programs, and social welfare programs. Different programs influence the functioning of others through connections. The integrated strategy combines all the features of the previous strategies and is structured to achieve the goals and objectives of growth, welfare, equity, and community participation. This paradigm takes an integrated but comprehensive perspective of major problems that occur within rural communities, including poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy.

During the past two decades, various new approaches like top-down planning, planning from below, bottom-up planning, micro-level planning, and multi-level planning have been put into operation within the framework of involving individuals in the phase of development (Olanrewaju, 2016). As the name implies, participatory strategy is concerned with the involvement of individuals in the formulation of strategies and approaches. In the tenth five-year plan, the government has devised a participatory strategy to promote the development of rural communities. Provision has been made to augment social and economic opportunities for individuals and groups by encouraging their participation in the decision-making processes. In the decision-making processes, individuals are required to conduct an analysis of the alternatives and put into operation the one that is most meaningful and beneficial. When individuals are participating in the decision-making processes, then they are required to implement rational and logical thinking. Rural individuals are well-aware in terms

of opportunities that would lead to improvements in their living conditions (Nenpomingyi & Gowon, 2019) [18].

Conclusion

The paper attempted to analyze rural transformation in Nigeria with emphasis on the major rural development policies that have been initiated in the country. It also identified the emerging and current challenges to achieving sustainable rural transformation in Nigeria. It is obvious that though the rural areas in Nigeria have constituted the bulk of the nation's population and have engaged in primary activities like agriculture that serve as a base for producing food and fiber, the living conditions of the rural populace have been characterized by extreme poverty, lack of access to basic facilities like health centers, schools, safe drinking water and good roads. Since rural areas are not attractive to live in, the country has continued to experience a massive rural-to-urban migration.

The government in Nigeria has initiated several policies to alleviate the deplorable conditions of the rural areas, but the situation has not changed much since independence. The challenges of policy inconsistency and implementation, involvement of the rural populace in development projects, corruption and mismanagement of resources, herders and farmer conflicts, amongst others, are still impeding the realization of rural development in Nigeria. The above submission indicates that no meaningful development in Nigeria can be attained unless priority is given to rural transformation.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were proffered:

1. More concerted efforts should be made toward the development of rural areas. These should include an increase in budget allocation, effective policy implementation, and completion.
2. Corruption and mismanagement of resources should also be discouraged by punishing officials engaged in associated corrupt practices and blocking channels of diverting resources through effective budget planning and monitoring.
3. Provision of security, conflict resolution, and building mechanisms should be of utmost priority in the rural areas to curb the recent increase in farmer-herder clashes and to also discourage the parties involved from taking the law into their own hands.
4. The aspect of participation is very critical in rural development. Thus, the rural populace should be involved and integrated in the formation and implementation of rural development projects if rural transformation is to be attained.

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