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OBSTACLES TOWARD SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW

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Abstract

The study examined the obstacles towards sustainable rural development in Nigeria. In Nigeria, a lot of development programmes and policies have been formulated over the years to ameliorate the suffering of the rural dwellers, still the situations of the rural areas remains the same. The objectives of the study are to; examine the concept of sustainability and sustainable development in Nigeria, identify some indicators of sustainable rural development, examining some past attempts of the government towards sustainable rural development and to analyses the obstacles to sustainable rural development and the way forward. The study adopted secondary sources of data, which were sourced from both published and unpublished materials, internet materials and some other materials relevant to the study. The study further revealed

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some of the past efforts of the government both at the federal, state and local levels, such as Operation feed the Nation (OFN),The Green Revolution Program, Better life program for African Rural Women (BLP), Graduate back to farm and so on. All these programmes failed woefully as a resuit of ; lack of continuity among our leaders, high level of corruption and embezzlement, conflicting programmes, lack of comprehensive template for rural development , non involvement of the relevant professionals and stakeholders in the development of rural areas and so on. The study thereby concluded that despite all the efforts of the governments to transformed the rural areas, the areas still remains inhabitable for living due to lack of social amenities such as potable water, electricity, good roads, health facilities, and so on. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made; involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the matters that concerns their communities, adequate monitoring and supervision of the projects, establishment of small scale industries in the rural areas and so on.

Introduction

The role of rural area in the socio- economy development of any nation can never be over emphasized, despite being predominantly consisted of the poorest people across the world (Emokpae, 2020). Rural area is associated with poor standard of living, lives in abject poverty, lacks of adequate social amenities, lives in isolation, and homogenously populated. Most rural areas in Nigeria are inhabitable for living, due to the absent of infrastructural facilities that are readily available in the urban centres/cities in developing nations. It is apparent that the little developmental projects in the rural areas are inadequate for the sustainability of the area, and it has a serious effect on the economy, social and the general environment of the area. Rural developments therefore are the programmes put in place to improve the standards of living of the rural dwellers. It is a process through which poverty rate in the rural area is eliminated and reduced totally in order to improve their income rate and productivity of rural dwellers and their families (Emokpae, 2020).

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The problems of the rural dwellers have been constant change in government/ failed governance, misplaced priorities, corruption and so on. This calls for more concentration on the obstacles to sustainability in rural development in Nigeria. Despite the fact that Nigeria was among the nations that have been re-organized with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and have since been engaging in various developmental programs to ascertain that these goals are actualized among its dwellers, it has however suffered various degrees of setbacks and the rural areas has remains in extreme poverty and retrogression that is defective of sustainability (Adelakun, 2013). Therefore, sustainable rural development has become one of the tasks of the government and the world community.

This research therefore focuses on various obstacles and setbacks that have confronted Nigerian programs to achieve a sustainable rural development over several years ago. The study itemizes the obstacles of the previous rural developmental programmes and concentrate on better ways to actualize sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

The Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to examine the obstacles of sustainable rural development in Nigeria

Objectives of the study are to ;

i. Examine the concept of sustainability and sustainable development in Nigeria
ii. Identify some past efforts of the government towards sustainable rural development in
Nigeria
iii. Identify some obstacles of sustainable rural development in Nigeria
iv. Make suggestions as to the way forward

Literature Review & Conceptual Frame work

The Concept of Sustainability & Sustainable Development

The ideas of sustainable development is one of the common terms that have in recent time become popular in various research because of its important to the world at large. Because, it has a significant role to play in the current reality and

state of global transformation and developmental trend. Most communities in the developing nations are confronted with various challenges that range from environmental, socio- economy, political and so on (Emas, 2015). This has made it compulsory to come up with various strategic approaches and programmes by world leaders, to tackle the problems confronting the rural areas and to measure up with the increasing demands and needs of the populace. Hence, the needs to employ or adopt sustainable development strategy to tackle developmental issues as they evolve (Steffen,,Broadgate,,Deutsch, & Ludwig, 2015). Sustainability on the other hands is the situation that can continue to exist for a very long period of time. It is the capacity to develop or maintain the situation and availability of desirable situation or material over a long period of time (Steffen et al. 2015). The overall concept of sustainability is channeled toward long term advancement of social life being, natural resources development and conservation and well-being of the populace (Piotr et al. 2016).

It is also necessary to understand the concept of development in order to have absolute idea of sustainable development. Development can be defined as the process of thriving or metamorphosis or transformative change at a very alarming way. It can also be describe as a process by which the inhabitants of a particular place are able to maximize control and make judicious use of the material resources endowed with (Raheem & Bako, 2014). The issue of sustainable development has been the focus of the world leaders for decade. It dates back to 1983 when the United Nations created the world commission on environment and development which later known as the Brundtland commission (Emas, 2015). By the year 1987, Brundtland Commission published a report tagged "Our Common future" which has been and would continue to be a referencing point to the course of sustainability. Sustainability has been defined by Brundtland commission as "Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs (UNDP, 2016), and this has been the vital focus of the United Nations and its associate in recent times. Sustainable development became necessary in the global course as a result of resilience promoting of the global community towards achieving high level of development which has resulted to environmental deterioration and other negative environmental effects.

Therefore, the united nations in the year 2012, camp up with sustainable development goals (SDGs) which consists set of goals that meet the political, economic and environmental matters confronting the entire world. This program overrides the initial millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that have been in existence since 2000 till 2015.

The MDGs has been impactful in the fight against poverty reduction, health improvement, portable water supply for all, child mortality reduction and so on (Umberto,Lisa,Geraid & Markus 2015; Derek, Amy, & Farooq 2015; UNDP, 2016). Sustainable development therefore indicates efficient utilization of available resources to ensure sustainability of the resources and to avoid waste and mismanagement of the resources, in order to cater for the present generation and the generations to come (Emas, 2015).

Concept of Rural Development

The concept of development is basically used to describe the positive growth and quality of lives of rural dwellers, in relation to qualitative change in economic performance rather than quantitative change (Emokpae, 2020). In a nutshell, development is the process of incorporating advancement of the quality of life of the dwellers, the creation of local regional income and employment opportunities, without affecting the resources of the environment negatively. In the situation of rural background, it means developing better physical, social and economic conditions of the rural less privileges.

The concept of "rural" the term rural has generated a lot of argument among scholars and rural sociologist. In a social perspective, it implies a more deeply rooted community life built around natural phenomena; an economically depends on crop farming, animal husbandry, cash crops and other related activities.

Rural Development is nearly associated with agricultural development. This is because of the serious connectivity between agriculture and rural development. Although agriculture is not the only sources of income of the rural dwellers and cannot be the only means of improving their well-being (Emokpae, 2020). Rural Development can be viewed as the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of the people living in a relatively small, isolated and sparsely populated areas. It is about poverty reduction, increasing productivity, providing basic services like potable water, health facilities, educational facilities, motorable

roads, sanitation and so on. The basic objectives of rural development is to organize, develop and make judicious use of available resources both human and material, in such a way that rural dwellers would have the opportunity to meet their basic needs such as food, water, shelter, clothing, including provision of education, and health facilities without affecting the environment negatively. This connote that the development of the rural area requires a serious mass participation and sustainability (Emokpae, 2020).

Some Indicators of Assessment of Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria

These covers three basic areas, they are:

1. **Economic Indicators** - In the rural areas, they engaged mainly in primary activities. This economic indicator is characterizing the development of rural areas and the level of sustainability of reproductions in the process of agriculture.
2. **Social Indicators** - In the rural areas, they lives in isolation, they are homogeneously population, lives a quiet live. The indicator is a reflection of the standards of living of the people; it has to do with the quality of life of the rural dwellers. The standard of living is very low, lack basic social amenities such as electricity, potable water supply, health facility, educational facilities, motorable roads and so on.
3. **Environmental Indicators** -This reflect the nature of the physical environment of the rural and the changes that take place in the environment such as land-use and the level of soil fertility in the rural areas. In the rural areas, greater percentage of their land is devoted for farming with greater open spaces.

   The economic, social and environmental indicators are used to assess the level of development of rural areas. The outcome of these indicators shows how effective the sustainable development policies are in the development and advancement of the rural areas (Nilesh & Boeing, 2015).

   These indicators show that the rural areas are associated with abject poverty and hardship in developing countries of the world despite their contributions to the growth of the nations economy, especially through agriculture. This called for urgent development of the rural areas and also the sustainability of such development.

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Past Efforts towards Rural Development in Nigeria

After Nigeria's Political independence in 1960, several national programmes and policies aimed at the improvement of the rural areas were initiated and pursued by the federal state and local governments.

Some of the programmes are:

Operation feed the Nation (OFN)

This was a major rural development policy which commenced in 1976, during the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo. The programme was designed to increase food production in the entire nation by creating awareness about the importance of agriculture, mobilizing the nation towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance in food production and encourage a balanced nutritional habit.

Some of the breakthrough recorded were the construction of feeder roads to facilitate the transportation of both cash and food crops from rural to urban areas, the allocation of 10 aircrafts for serial spraying against pests which attacks crops and also the importation of day old chicks which were later distributed to the various OFN farms across the country. The programme failed to measure up the overall impact of the program on rural development in Nigeria. Although there were a lot awareness, but the rural farmers who are the main producers were excluded, indiscriminate use of land for farming activities, lack of farming knowledge and so on were the shortcomings of the program. The programme fold up naturally with the exit of the regime of the then federal military government.

The Green Revolution Programme

The programme was inaugurated by Shehu Shagari administration in 1980. The idea was to make Nigeria self-sufficiency in terms of food production. The programme was meant to replace OFN and it aimed at increasing food production and raw materials in order to ensure food security and promote rural development through the use of modern farm tools such as improved seedlings, fertilizers, tractors, harrowing and so on. The federal government provided agrochemicals, improved seedlings, irrigation facilities and credit facilities for small-scale business owners in rural areas and also provided improved marketing and favourable pricing policy for agricultural products. The program failed to achieve it's objectives due to delay in execution of most of the project involved in the

programme. The program were not well monitored and evaluated, therefore, it ends up with the exit of its founders.

River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA)

The programme was launched in 1976 during General Olusegun Obasanjo's regime as a result of the doubt between the United Nation (UN) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on the existing abundant water resources in the country and its positive effect on agricultural productivity. The programme focused on establishing twelve river basin development authorities (Ayoola, 2001). The aim of the programme was to enhanced the economic potentials of the existing water bodies focusing mainly on undertaking comprehensive development of both surface and underground water resources for multi purpose use, providing water from reservoirs and lakes for irrigation purposes to rural farmers, pollution control in rivers according to laid down standards, developing fishes and improving navigation on the rivers within the authority's area and assisting the state and local government in the implementation of rural development plan. Some of the RBDA's include Sokoto-Rima Basin, Hedejia-Jamaera Basin, Upper Benue Basin, Lower Benue Basin, Cross River Basin, the Niger Delta Basin, The Benin - Owena Basin, Lake Chad Basin and so on (Ahmed, Gbadebo,Iselobhor,& Tokede 2021). Some of the program could not see the light of the day, for these reasons; exclusion of rural dwellers from decision making and implementation process, policy discontinuity inadequate funding, neglect and abandonment by successive past military regimes and lack of understanding of its objectives.

Directorate for Food, Roads & Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)

This was one of the programmes initiated in Nigeria under the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1986, to correct the major errors of earlier rural development programmes. The programme was established to improve the quality of life in nutrition, housing, health, employment, industrialization, road, water, electricity supply and standard of living of the rural dwellers. DFRRI provided basic amenities of modern living and development, rural access roads to connect rural-rural communities, rural -urban centres and farmers to the markets. This was because, the major problems encountered by farmers and farming activities was poor road network system.

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DFRRI was later put on hold by the administration and this weakened the programme and rendered it less effective. There were allegations that DFRRI took glory for past programmes, there were allegations of large-scale embezzlement, poor management of infrastructure, inconsistency policy, lack of accountability by the initiators and organizers of the programme (Ahmed et al, 2021).

Better Life Programme (BLP) For African Rural Women

The programme was initiated by her excellency, late Dr (Mrs) Maryam Babangida (wife of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1987). The programme was conceived at a workshop organised by late Dr (Mrs) Maryam Babangida. The main goal was to make the rural women self-sufficient and relevant to her family first and the society at large. The program was aimed at eradicating poverty by motivating and empowering rural women through adult literacy and skills acquisition training towards achieving better living standards (Ahmed et al, 2021). Other objectives of the programme include child mortality reduction, providing income generating opportunities in agriculture and cottage industries, integrating rural women into national development plans and developing educational training for rural women. The programme recorded little success such as the provision of more agricultural inputs to women farmers, provision of farmlands to rural women in Akwa-Ibom, Ondo and Kaduna States through local government councils and community heads for cash crop production, provision of loans and credit facilities to rural women and so on.

The programme also suffered set back very similar to that of DFRRI due to change in government. The major set back was that most of its activities were concentrated in the Urban Centers; most of the flamboyant activities of BLP were carried out at the national and state capitals. The rural women who were the main target of the programme were neglected and abandoned from the main activities of the programme.

Obstacles to Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria.

Conflicting Programmes and Projects

One of the factors hindering sustainable rural development in Nigeria is conflicting programmes and projects. It is a very common phenomena to see an administration initiating similar and conflicting programmes, even irrelevant

programmes that may not have positive effect on the lives of rural dwellers. Moreso whenever there is a change of government, the new administration is in the habit of abandoning the precious projects and programmes of the previous administration. For example, better life programme for Rural women initiated in 1987 was later transformed into family support programme (FSP) in 1994 and later to Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in 1996 with similar aim and objectives.

Corruption and Embezzlement

In most cases, the funds meant for the development of the rural areas is either diverted to other areas or embezzled by the government officials in charge of rural development programmes and policies. In Nigeria, so many rural development programmes have not materialized simply because of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. Most of rural development programmes are always implemented on paper, and in reality, there may be nothing to show on ground.

Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation.

There are many programmes and policies designed to improve the standards of living of rural dwellers by the government, the programmes failed woefully due to lack of adequate monitoring and evaluation by the government officials. Mostly, the government representative charged with rural development stays at the federals or state's capital from where they attempt to develop the rural areas. Even most of the officials are not familiar with the rural areas.

Lack of Comprehensive Template for Rural Development.

Governments have designed various policies for rural development since independent in 1960, but has not been able to achieve much because, most of the policies lack comprehensive template. This is usually a problem when the tenure of the government in power ends or the administration is cut off usually by impeachment or coup plot (Emokpae, 2020).

Lack of Industries

The rural areas serve as the sources of raw materials to the urban centres, also serve as sources of food supply. Despite that, they have not been positioned as

places where the industries are located. This is due to lack of infrastructure to aid such industrial activities. Also, it may, have been due to the fact that majority of the end users of products are resided in cities with large population and many factories prefer that the products are produced at locations closer to the end users (Raheem & Bako, 2014).

Non Involvement of Relevant Professionals and Stakeholders in Policy formulation,

Planning and Implementation.

Poor policy formulation and implementation and inability to carry the relevant professionals and Stakeholders along in the development of rural areas in Nigeria are a great problem. Policy makers in Nigeria are good at formulating policies to achieve sustainable rural development, as well as initiating the programmes. The missing link between these policies and programmes put in place to achieve development in the rural areas in Nigeria is as a result of the gaps that exist between the government and the various stakeholders within the sector as well as lack of opportunities for decision making. In most cases, the sociologists, agriculturists and more importantly, the rural dwellers are usually neglected while carrying out policies as regards the development of their communities. These stakeholders are in best positions in identifying, planning and formulating policies and programmes that will best suit the needs of the rural dwellers, and also ensure that such policies and programmes are implemented completely (Ahmed et al, 2021).

Lack of Manpower and Technical Know-how.

Rural Development in Nigeria lack adequate manpower and technical know how such as rural sociologists who understand the sociology of the rural dwellers. While taking policies regards the rural development, the norms, values, beliefs of the dwellers must be taken into consideration. In many cases, rural development are hindered because of lack of understanding of rural people's ways of life. Adequate skilled manpower makes sustainable rural development goal a reality as envisaged by national and international organizations.

Conclusion

The study thereby concluded that despite all the programmes and policies of the federal, state and local government towards sustainable rural development in Nigeria, rural areas still remains backward, Most of the programmes initiated by

the government to eradicate poverty and transformed the rural areas failed woefully due to so many reasons; such as lack of man power, corruption and embezzlement, lack of adequate monitoring among our leaders. Moreover, to achieve sustainable rural development, the key stakeholders in the community should be carried along in matters related to community development, and governments at all levels should have a comprehensive template for sustainable rural development in Nigeria.

The way forward

Based on the challenges and obstacle to sustainable rural development examined in the research, the following recommendations were made.

i. While taking decision on matters regarding the rural areas, the relevant stakeholders and relevant professionals bodies should be carried along to ensure a better result.
ii. The issues of corruption and embezzlement of public funds needs to be tackled in order to achieve sustainable rural development.
iii. The needs for adequate monitoring and supervision of rural development programs and policies, to ensure appropriate implementations of generally agreed projects.
iv. Organization of National Rural Development Strategy summit to produce a policy framework for coordinated rural development in Nigeria.
v. Adoption of participatory approach, sustainable rural development should be joint efforts of both the government and the inhabitants of the rural area.
vi. Establishment of small scale industries in the rural areas, to generate employment and reduce the levels of poverty in the areas.

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