RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF RURAL POVERTY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper critically evaluated the relationship between rural development programmes and policies of the Nigerian State; and the challenge of rural poverty and contradictions of rural underdevelopment in Nigeria. The paper affirmed the efforts of the governments in tackling rural underdevelopment through the states surfeit of rural development programmes, cascade of rural projects and rural investments and huge appropriation of funds for rural transformation but is concerned that these efforts have not mitigated rural poverty. The paper set out to interrogate the following objectives: the determinants of rural poverty in Nigeria; the critical evaluation of the programmes and policies of rural development; and the impediments to rural development in Nigeria. The paper is basically theoretical and qualitative in analysis with secondary source of data. The paper is guided by the insights provided by Mode of production approach as the theoretical framework. Main findings revealed that though infrastructural deficit plays a part in deciphering rural poverty in Nigeria, but the paper showed that the faulty development approach of the rural development programmes, corruption, undue bureaucratization and non-inclusiveness are the major factors sustaining rural poverty and underdevelopment in Nigeria. The paper recommends an integrated rural development programme; inclusiveness in rural development design and execution; and openness and transparency in Federal and State governments` rural development intervention programmes and implementation, among others, as antidotes to rural poverty and underdevelopment.

Key words: Poverty, development, rural areas, rural poverty, rural development, rural programmes

1. Introduction

It is not indisputable that the level of abject poverty as defined by those living below the International Poverty Line of $2.15 mark per day (World Bank, 2023) in Nigeria is stupendous. That over 63 percent or nearly 134 million Nigerians today are living in multi-dimensional poverty is not only unprecedented but portends enormous threat to nation building and national development (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2022). However, the rural area where over 63 percent of the Nigerian population reside (IFAD, 2019) is home to the majority of the Nigerian poor. Indeed, over 70 percent Nigerians living in the rural areas live in abject poverty (Sasu, 2023). The situation is worsening. As succinctly put by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2021 report) "The number of rural dwellers in extreme poverty rose by 50% in the last twenty years", and the majority of the world absolute poor are people in the rural areas (Montaldo, 2019). The stark reality of rural poverty is typified by the decrepit and squalid conditions of the rural dwellers. The manifestations of poverty are not in contention. The lives of the rural dwellers are still characterised by high maternal and infant mortality, inadequate medical facility, illiteracy, high incidence of communicable diseases, low

income, high labour drudgery, inadequate food, poor sanitary and substandard housing conditions; lack of safe water and poor infrastructural base as well as pervasive socio-economic deprivations.

The palpable concern for rural poverty at global, national and sub national levels as well as among scholars, international agencies and international and indigenous NGOs is understandable. The rural area is where the majority of human resources reside. The rural areas are mostly host to the natural, material and agricultural resources that are fundamental to national development (Anyanwu, 2006). Unfortunately, often times, the exploitation of these resources live tell tales of environmental degradation, poverty, diseases and decapitation in the rural areas. Sometimes, the spot of the exploitable resources become islands of development in the sea of monumental squalor, underdevelopment and crises. The rural area therefore fits a fitting aphorism of "poverty in the midst of plenty", a paradox of underdevelopment within the enclave of development resources. The neglect of rural areas despite being source of resources for national and international development as well as source of good life for a few members of the ruling class and international collaborators has continued to generate tensions in the rural areas while constituting threat to national integration.

The realisation that poverty in the rural areas is a result of rural neglect in the deployment of infrastructure in favour of urban areas has led to a *hogde podge* of programmes and policies by the three levels of Nigerian government geared towards ameliorating these problems. In the same vein, projects and infrastructure have also been seen as critical to the mitigation of poverty and rural underdevelopment. Equally, rural industrialisation both states owned and private have surreptitiously made investment in the rural areas for the exploitation of rural resources both human and material resources with assumed unintended consequences of bringing development to the rural areas. However, the manner of the deployment of rural infrastructure and investments has tended in most cases to create more crises of poverty and deprivation than the mitigation of poverty. Thus, despite several attempts by the government and other development institutions towards improving the rural areas, a wide gap still exists between policy formulation, implementation and the reality of the level of development on ground.

Our endeavour in this paper is to interrogate the effectiveness of the state-induced rural development programmes and policies, deployment of rural infrastructure and public and private investment in rural areas in engendering rural poverty reduction, promote productivity and enhance national development. This is because if not well managed the added facility in the rural areas in terms of infrastructure and investments takes on a life of its own and threatens the community with crises, environmental degradation and alienation. By and large, Nigerian poverty and contradictions of underdevelopment is a reflection of the poverty, deprivation and faulty development policies in the Nigerian rural areas. Thus, this research set out to: establish the determinants of rural poverty in Nigeria; examine the effectiveness of rural development programmes and policies in rural poverty alleviation; analyze the impediments to poverty eradication and development in the rural areas; and recommend ways of harnessing rural resources, rural infrastructure and rural investments towards mitigating rural poverty and engendering rural development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Literature

2.1.1 Poverty

We begin by conceptualizing poverty as a condition where peoples basic needs are not met because the inability to participate in the societal activities lead both to low income and low

standard of living. The poor in the society are those whose income or resources fall far short of the average that they do not have an acceptable standard of living (Haralambos & Holborn 2008). When conceptualized sociologically, poverty can be seen as a reflection of the societal social structure that defines poverty as the position one finds himself in social hierarchy. Access to societal resources is determined by ones position in the social hierarchy and not the availability of resources and this lack of access manifests in poverty of individuals in the society. Inequitable distribution of societal resources in a perverted or exploitative society places the marginalised within the spectre of poverty in the society (Crossman, 2019).

In view of the foregoing articulation of poverty, some scholars have defined the rural poor as constituting that segment of the society that live below the poverty line; and whose conditions are quite deplorable and who do not share in the benefit of the society, being influenced by their fringe habitation. This conceptualization of rural poverty is elaborated by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD, 2011) with her contention that rural poverty amounts to all the conditions found on the rural areas that include factors of rural culture, rural economy and rural political system that give rise to rural poverty. According to Brookings (2019), rural poverty stems from limited access to markets, education quality infrastructure, employment opportunities health and financial products.

Other scholars have defined rural poverty and underdevelopment within the context of their relation with external forces or authorities. For instance, Nzimiro (1985) argued that the rural peasants are those whose back are bent down by imperialists and local exploiters who sit choking them and pretending to ease their lot in all possible means except by getting off their backs. And as Wolf (1966) averred, the rural poor are the rural cultivators whose surpluses are transferred to a dominant group of rulers that uses the surplus both to underwrite its own standard of living and distribute the remnants to groups in society that do not farm but must be fed for their specific goals and services in turn". Wolf`s and Nzimiro`s contention on rural exploitation by outside forces including the state subsists because as argued by some scholars (Anyanwu, 2006; Ekpe, 2006; Motaldo, 2019), poverty dominates in the rural areas because of inequity in the distribution of amenities and infrastructural facilities between the urban and rural areas. Also, others (see Olatunbosun, 1975; Okowa, 1985; and Nzimiro, 1985) have shown how allocations to rural areas from development plans of 1970-1975 and 1975-1980 were 6% and 7% of development infrastructure respectively. Thus the juxtaposition of infrastructural installation in rural and urban areas revealed that while rural areas suffer amenities and infrastructural facility, the resources from the rural areas are used to provide amenities and facilities in the urban areas that ensured good life for them while condemning the rural areas to misery, poverty and underdevelopment.

2.1.2 Rural Development

Rural development in Nigeria has been conceived in terms of improvement in agriculture for the export of cash crops and production of food for the urban population as well as installation of infrastructure for the facilitation of these activities. This agrees with the World Bank (2006) conception of rural development as the modernization and the monetization of rural society and its transition from traditional isolation to the integration with national economy. A major way of achieving this development target is through the deployment of technology and other basic infrastructure. Kanu & Ukonze (2015), in line with this conception of rural development, argued that development of rural areas is coterminous with the provision of physical infrastructure. The provision of physical infrastructure will have the spin off effect of provision of schools, hospitals, roads, electricity and pipe borne water. The Nigerian State further asserts in its 1980-1985 fourth development plan that the main objectives of rural development are to

increase rural productivity and income, and to diversify rural economy and generally enhance the quality of life in the rural areas.

Rural development articulated in the above schema flounders in its objective because of the paternalistic tendency of deciding for the rural community what their needs are and how the needs can be prioritised. Development in the rural areas must be anthropocentric. It must be inclusive and integrated. That is why we agree with Ering (2006) that rural development connotes the processes by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the lives of rural dwellers, and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress. We further concur with the United Nations (2005) assertion that integrated rural development suggest that all aspects of development are co-ordinated and flow together to form an unbroken whole. Thus programme for the promotion of agriculture, education, and training, health and nutrition, community development and the like must be planned and executed in a coordinated fashion with account being taken of the effect that development in one area are likely to have on other. Rural development sufficiently articulated in this way will significantly reflect in the national development. The rural area after all is the fulcrum around which the national natural and human resources are predicated.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The Mode of Production approach is the basic theoretical framework for this study. The Mode of production of approach is a Neo-Marxist theory that roots its meaning from Structural Marxism with the writings of people like Meillassoux, Althuser, Philip Rey and John Taylor. The analysis of this school is based on the articulation of the capitalist mode of production with the pre-capitalist mode of production which stretched over the historical phases of capitalist development from mercantilism to monopoly capitalism. The articulation of the pre-capitalist mode by capitalism created two modes of production in the Third World countries in such a way that the pre-capitalist mode is conditioned to serve the interest of international capitalism. The theory further argues that imperial capitalism employs the tactics of dissolution and preservation. The destruction or the distortion of pre-capitalism help the thriving of capitalism, while outright obliteration of pre-capitalism will be detrimental to capitalism (Leys, 1985).

As Taylor (1981) poignantly argued, When the reproduction of dominant mode of production blocked by the emergence of a new mode of production, the articulation of practices has its objective to transform those appropriate to the previous mode of production, to restructure them in relation to the reproductive requirements of the new mode of production.

The articulation of capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production in the Third World countries gives rise to a disarticulated economy causing wanton deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the Third World, particularly African countries. The transformation of Third World economies therefore is not into authentic capitalism but rather into peripheral capitalism (Amin, 1984)

The rural areas in Nigeria have been suffering from poverty and underdevelopment not so much because of lack of investment and infrastructure in the areas but rather as a consequence of the exploitative nature of such investment against the rural dwellers. The expropriation of land, labour, mineral and natural resources in the rural areas live the rural dwellers devastated with poverty, hunger and marginalisation because the rural areas cannot contend with the level of technology, finance and organisation of the capitalist investors. As contended by Wellestein

(2011), when a social formation with higher techno-culture encounters a social formation with a lower techno-culture, the latter is willy-nilly compelled to pander to the interest of the former.

3. Methodology

This study is conducted as theoretical and qualitative paper with the data sourced from the secondary sources. Secondary data are data that have been collected, collated and produced by individuals, groups, agencies and states other than the researcher using the data. Such data can be elicited from official statistics, historical sources, life documents, mass media and internet sources (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). We also elicited data from the Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government that are concerned with issues of rural and community development, poverty alleviation and economic development. Data were also procured from international organisations that include global, continental and regional as well as international and national Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

In using data from the secondary sources, the researchers are conscious of their authenticity and validity, particularly where the data are from the government official statistics. However, we ensured the integrity of the data by subjecting same to rigorous research scrutiny and authentication through content analysis. This is to ensure that the official statistics and mass media information that are used in the study are devoid of the manipulations of vested interests in the corridors of power (Bryna, 2001).

3.1 Main Findings

Our findings reflect the major themes in our objectives and which form the basis of the discussion.

3.1.1 Determinants of Rural Poverty

The unprecedented poverty in the rural areas is a manifestation of a hodgepodge of factors. Statistics show that over 70 percent of the abject poor in Nigeria lives in the rural areas and more than 75 percent of the population of the rural Nigerians are poor in the absolute terms (Akpata, Igbalajobi & Awoniyi, 2010). Some of the determinants of the rural poverty and underdevelopment include:

i. Lack of Rural Infrastructure and Appropriate Technology: One of the major problems of rural dwellers is the paucity of basic infrastructure that drives productive activity. Rural infrastructure is a basic desideratum to rural development. This is because rural infrastructure has the capacity of transforming the rural communities and not only enabling them to raise their productivity but make them attractive to habitation. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2019), rural development is enhanced, with the effective and efficient management of rural resources, inclusive authority intervention and appropriate rural infrastructure. However, rural infrastructure to be able to make effective impact in the rural areas must come with the appropriate technology that can be easily deployed for the maximum engagement with the environment (Okoli, Mary & Chinenye, 2020). Heavy technology and the infrastructure that are not within the context of the rural inhabitants will rather than mitigate poverty end up exacerbating the poverty monster through the truncation of the development priorities of the rural dwellers (Ezenagu, 2004; Anikpo, 1996).

ii. Dearth of the Right Institutions: A basic determinant of poverty in the rural areas is the lack lustre institutionalisation. Social Institutions are germane in rural growth because they define the context of relationship among the citizens and between the people and the state. The distortion of the traditional institution by colonialism and neo-colonialism, has made the

transition of rural areas into modern systems of authority relations very difficult if not impossible (Ekpenyong, 2000). Unfortunately, the intricate balance of authority between the traditional institutions and the central government has made development of rural areas difficult because of the hegemonic tendency of defining the rural inhabitants out of the formulation, design and execution of the rural policies and programmes (UKpong-Umoh & Mboho, 2014). Again, the traditional authorities` capacity to show direction of the character and behaviour of the rural dwellers has witled down significantly. This is compounded by lack of clear-cut division of authority between the state and the local or traditional authority. This puts the rural dwellers in dilemma on where their loyalty should lay (Kelechi & Ogbu, 2015). This non-descript power balance is sometimes cashed in by the deviants such that the local authority is put in a difficult way of controlling those whose behaviour threaten not just the immediate locality but may snowball into a threat for the country at large.

iii. Human Resource Decapitation: The productive population in the rural areas in Nigeria is always decapitated through migration to the urban areas. The push factor in the migration has always been lack of gainful employment in the rural areas (Opoola, 2011). Beyond the dearth of employment is the lack of amenities and basic critical infrastructure that not only make life comfortable but aid in the productive processes in the rural areas (Kanu & Ukonze, 2015). Again, rural labour is decapitated through employment of rural productive labour by the rural capitalists or bourgeoisie (Oya, 2007). Poverty in the rural areas is inexorably aggravated when the active productive labour is expunged from the rural communities either by migration or through the expropriation of rural labour by rural capitalist or farm kulaks. As succinctly stated by Wilson et al, (2023), the decapitation of human resource in the rural areas will impact deleteriously on rural economy, rural development, standard of living and low agricultural productivity

iv. Level of Income Generation: Many scholars recognize the fact that income is still the best indicator or measure of poverty. Rural poverty is associated with subsistence production since rural dwellers are essentially agriculturists with rudimentary agricultural techniques, leading to low level production. Food production is done mainly for consumption in households. Cash income generated is negligible and is not enough to purchase major household and luxury items, payment of school fees, access good medical services, among others.

Studies have shown that rural poverty has steadily increased in Nigeria in terms of inadequate shelter, clothing and food for the rural dwellers. Ifeanacho, Nte & Nwangwus` (2009) observation gives credence to these views when they remarked that a fundamental paradox in Nigeria is that about two-third of the population are poor, despite living with vast potential wealth, with increasing revenues from oil and other sectors of the economy. Poverty tends to increase among individuals and families when their income generating activities cannot meet the basic standard of living of their societies (UNDP, 2012). The high level of poverty in the rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa is basically because of the restricted nature of their income generating activities.

v. Access to Financial and Economic Resources in the Rural Areas: A major explicatory variable in the determination of poverty is the position of the poor in the structure of the forces that underlay socio-economic equation in the society. The major determinant of poverty in the rural Nigeria according to the World Bank (2009) survey report is that most people because of their class position in the community lack access to economic and productive resources. Most families due to tradition and accident of historical essence as well as ennobling customary inhibitions cannot access the productive assets such as land, economic trees and mineral

resources (Moro, 2008). Again in Nigeria only 46 percent of land is cultivated leaving large areas of ungoverned land. The limited land for economic activities has been further constricted by the activities of bandits and terrorists whose main area of operations are mainly the rural areas across Nigeria but basically in the Northern parts of the country (Sanchi, 2023). Inability to access and control productive resources generates poverty among many rural dwellers in Nigeria.

vi. Environmental Problems: Nigerian rural areas have faced unprecedented environmental problems manifesting in erosion, flooding, drought and degradation of environment that reflects in land, water and air pollution. While part of the environmental problems may stem from natural causes arising from the move of climate change (Agbola & Fayiga, 2016); much of the problems are actually consequences of human activities, dearth of adequate technology and infrastructure to tame the environment and low institutional processes and diminished political will to enforces extant environmental control measures (Burk & Tahir, 2022). For instance, much of the South-Eastern part of Nigeria, particularly Anambra, Imo and Abia States have lost monumental cultivable and habitable land spaces to gully erosion with Orumba and Aguata Local Government Areas in Anambra State losing as much as 13.5 percent or 2,820km2 of arable land to gully erosion (Ike, 2017). In the North, particularly the North-East and the North-West drought and desertification have not only significantly eliminated the flora and fauna in the area but have seriously affected 55-77 percent of arable land (Oloukoi, Adgbasa & Dasat, 2018).

In the same vein, in the South-South region of Nigeria, the rural areas have faced so much environmental despoliation such that in the last one decade, the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) recorded 9, 856 oil spills between 2011 and 2021 have occurred in the oil producing areas of the region (Kareem, 2022). This is coupled with gas flaring that has significantly affected the air and water as over 3.8 billion standard cupid feet of gas has been flared in the last ten years (2012-2021) according to NOSDRA despite extant laws against gas flaring (Ibrahim, 2022). In the North-Central, the land has been dilapidated with artisanal and illegal mining with much of the land dilapidated and silted due to holes vulnerable to wind and water erosion created by illegal miners (Adamu et al, 2022). The environmental problems ravaging the rural areas have constricted their productive capacity in farming, fishing, animal husbandry and mining. This situation has not only diminished their standard of living, but also worsened the poverty situation in the rural areas.

3.1.2 Nigerian Rural Development Programmes and Policies

Nigerian government has shown concern for rural development with a surfeit of programmes and policies that have been geared towards mitigating rural poverty and enhancing rural development. Rural development policies and programmes have traversed both colonial and post- colonial periods. National Development plans enunciated between 1946 and 1980 laid emphasis on cash crop production while minimal attention was paid to the development of infrastructure in the rural areas (Nzimiro, 1985). However, a major emphasis on rural development crystallised in the Third National Development Plan of 1975-1980. The plan stated *inter alia* that "efforts will be made to increase rural productivity and income; diversify rural economy; and generally, enhance the quality of life in the rural areas through the provision of social amenities such as rural health-care, pipe-borne water, roads and electricity" (Third National Development Plan, 1975).

In line with the plan, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) launched the National Accelerated Food Production in 1975. The programme intended to raise agricultural

productivity through emphasis on the use of high yielding seeds, fertilizers and pesticides to be coordinated by Federal and State ministries of agriculture through effective management. These inputs will be distributed to the rural areas, particularly the small holder farmers through Agro-service centres to be established at the local government headquarters. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was launched in 1976 by Obasanjo`s government with the aim of stimulating the growth of food by individuals and institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities. Its aim was to diffuse through education the idea that everyone must grow food. The Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) was inaugurated in 1979 as an integrated rural development project that involves agricultural production, feeder roads, water and electricity and jointly funded by the World Bank, Federal and State Governments.

The River Basin Development Authorities were established in 1981 to harness water resources in the country for a coordinated irrigation necessary for the growth of agriculture. It is a rural based intensive project designed to create areas of year-round cultivation of crops which will provide both food and raw material base for the agro-based industries. In 1980, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched the Green Revolution. The programme was aimed at boosting agriculture and rural development through the establishment of agro-industries; construction of feeder roads; and provision of housing, educational facilities, water and electricity in the rural areas (Paul, Agba & Chukwura, 2014).

In 1986, another seeming rural integrated development programme was launched named The Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) by the regime of the military president Ibrahim Babangida. The programme's main aims, according to Nzimiro (1996), were to: organise the people to produce in their own way and within their social circumstances; open the roads with their communal involvement so that a network of exchange relationship through the market will be established; set up rural social infrastructure, electricity, clean water, hospitals and clinics, schools with the aid of the state fund to ameliorate their social life; and integration of rural community dwellers into the mainstream of political participation.

Another grandiose rural development programme though dedicated more to the feminine population named Better Life for Rural Women was launched in 1987 by the wife of the then president Mrs Mariam Babangida in realisation of the fact that women that constitute 50 percent of the population bear the brunt of the difficult life in the rural areas. The Better Life for Rural Women programme aimed at: enhancing and stimulating rural women and rural populace to improve their environment; cultivating the spirit of self-development in rural women through the promotion of rural education, business and recreation; creating greater awareness among the populace about the women; raising the social consciousness of women about their rights, as well as their social, political and economic responsibility; mobilising women for concrete activities towards achieving specific objectives; enlightening women in rural areas on opportunities and facilities available to them at their local government areas; and encouraging women to institutionalise enriched family life, simple hygiene standards and recreation (Ajayi, 2010).

Fadama project was another integrated rural programme launched in 1992 by the Federal Government as a pilot agricultural project designed to offer basic irrigation to farmers in selected states. In 2003, the Federal Government launched the Fadama11 projects to boost food production using the local farmers through an enhanced rural development integrated system. Fadama is a Hausa word for low-lying flood plains; usually with easily accessible shallow groundwater. Fadama are typically waterlogged during the rainy seasons but retain moisture during the dry season. These areas are considered to be of high potential for economic

development through appropriate investments in infrastructure, household assets and technical assistance (Adeolu & Taiwo, 2004).

3.1.3 Impediments to Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Empirical evidences indicate over the years that rural development programmes and policies as enunciated by the Nigerian State and sometimes in collaboration with foreign interest have not mitigated the stark realities of rural poverty and underdevelopment, even with humongous financial investments. Certain factors, as explained below, are usually responsible for failure of poverty alleviation programmes and escalation of rural poverty.

i. Faulty Development Policy: The Nigerian development policy in the rural areas is mostly non-anthropocentric, non-inclusive top-bottom approach that alienates the target population (the rural dwellers) from the formulation, design, execution of the rural programmes and projects. This development policy flows from the pertanalistic approach to development that defines priorities for the people because the people are seen not to be knowledgeable enough to know their order of priorities. Development must therefore be in the interest of the people because development enables people to realise their potentials and not for any external interest. The people must be fully involved in the choice of amenities: roads, water, electricity, recreation, schools, health care etc that should come first in order of priorities for them. When the interests of the external factors such as the politicians, bureaucrats, top military brass, kulak farmers and other members of the ruling class including international collaborators are served, other than the rural dwellers in the rural development process; the consequence is hunger, stagnation, crises and disorganisation of the rural communities (Nzimiro, 1996).

ii. Lack of Adequate Funding: Appropriation of funds for rural development has always been seen as inconsequential because of the low value attached to the establishment of amenities in the rural areas by the nation`s policy makers (Kanu & Ukonze, 2015). This is despite the fact that the bulk of the national wealth is exploited from the rural areas. It is however imperative to appreciate the fact that the paucity of funds for rural development is structural and legally institutionalised. This is because of the structure of the federation that is unduly skewed at centre to the chagrin of the units. The implication is that much of the societal wealth is appropriated at the centre, while the local government with the rural areas receive the lowest fund allocation from the federation account. The result is that there is always paucity of funds for the development and alleviation of poverty in the rural areas. Furthermore, most state governments concentrate development infrastructure in the urban areas for ego massage or self-adulatory purposes from the visitors and urban dwellers while the rural areas is neglected precisely because development of the rural areas is not as exposed as the urban areas and therefore such development initiative will not yield political capital for the state chief executive.

iii. Corruption: Corruption is a major factor in the appreciation of poverty in rural area. Corruption manifests in various ways in the rural areas. In the first place, there is statutory corruption that is surreptitiously embellished by the Nigerian government through the constitution that provided for the joint account between the state governments and their local governments. The state governments disburse the money on the basis of her whims and caprices while diverting the funds to programmes though vital in the running of government but ostensibly not for the rural development and rural poverty alleviation that the money has been appropriated for *ab initio.* Other forms of corruption in the rural setting include: contract inflation, kickbacks, outright embezzlement of funds, projects abandonment and manipulation of external interventions by vested interests that include politicians, government officials,

bureaucrats and other members of the ruling class such that the main targets of the interventions are alienated. There is therefore a direct relationship between official corruption and increasing poverty in the rural areas.

iv. Lack of Continuity: A basic problem of development process in Nigerian is the non-sustainability of development programmes, policies and projects. Government is a continuous process irrespective of the differences between the preceding and the succeeding governments, thus ensuring that programmes and projects continue seamlessly. In Nigeria however, governments operate in sort of staccato fashion where the end of government presupposes that the incoming government starts on a clean state. The uncanny consequence of this situation is that projects are diverted, abandoned or allowed to collapse. In Nigeria, rural programmes and policies hardly sustain as each die with the government that berthed it; thus, living in its trail Nigerian rural communities replete with abandoned, uncompleted and unsustainable projects. Poverty and underdevelopment become inexorable where there are unsustainable programmes and projects. This has been the lot of the Nigerian rural communities.

v. Undue Bureaucratisation: Nigerian rural development programmes are enmeshed in a web of complicated bureaucratic red tapism and unbridled bottle necks such that the entire programme remain sophistry to the rural dwellers who are the supposed beneficiary of the projects. This will inevitably stall accessibility to such things as the agricultural inputs, fertilizers, funds, land, and resources that can improve the life chances of the rural dwellers. A major reason why DFRRI failed according to Nzimiro (1996: 179) is because "the great programmes have been dislocated by bureaucratic fiat".

The programmes and policies designed to mitigate poverty and ensure rural development have been largely ineffective because of the specific development approach reflected in the development programmes. The rural areas still suffer marginalisation, deprivation, infrastructural deficit, neglect and alienation. This has unfortunately conduced into high level of criminality, national crisis and national underdevelopment.

4. Result and Discussions

The preceding section dealt with the Nigerian rural development policies and programmes and the reasons for their failure in lifting the rural areas out of poverty and underdevelopment. In this section we direct our prognosis on the consequences of rural under development in Nigeria. The consequences include:

i. Deficit Housing and sanitary conditions: Most of the rural inhabitants live in deplorable housing conditions. Many communities in rural Nigeria are replete with mud houses and thatched roofs with largely no basic amenities such as toilets, bathrooms. The implication is that the surrounding bushes and open places are used as toilets, bathrooms and kitchen with health and sanitary hazards. Again, majority of rural houses are overcrowded with average of four to six persons per room. The squalid housing condition is a manifestation of the poverty and underdevelopment in the rural areas of Nigeria. This agrees with NISER (2017) study that revealed that 69.7% of rural dwellings have no access to kitchen and toilet facilities and alarming 96.5% have no access to safe refuse disposal mechanisms.

ii. Lack lustre health/Nutrition: For most rural communities in Nigeria, health facilities are either non-existence or grossly inadequate. Accessing medical assistance during health challenge has always been a herculean task for the rural dwellers. This includes even the children and pregnant women during child birth. The consequence is high morbidity rate, infant

mortality and maternal mortality. This finding is supported by Oladipupo, Oyelade, Daramola and Ibidun (2015) study of Nigerian rural health delivery system which showed that accessibility of rural dwellers to appropriate medicare is way below expected standard due mainly to the fact that medical practitioners don`t stay in the rural medical centres because of dearth of requisite infrastructural facilities.

Similarly, the study found out that majority of the families feeding status in the communities is way below UN recognised standard of 2,400 to 3,000 calorie intake per adult individual per day. Indeed, much of their nutrition which is hardly up to three times a day is carbohydrate of mainly fufu, yam and potato. Beverages are only luxury but for few rural families. Poverty has made them believe that it is only the rich that drink tea and eat eggs. Off course, they are right because their level of income cannot support beverages in their menu. According to Obong & Uwagbute (2001), health and nutritional status of rural dwellers are determined by socio-economic, cultural and educational factors.

iii. Environmental Degradation: Nigerian rural communities suffer terrible environmental crises arising out of poverty induced life style. The nature of farming, fishing, grazing and mining and oil exploration without appropriate technology and environmental safety measures have conduced into flooding, gully erosion, desertification, air, land and water erosion in different rural communities with devastating consequences that have worsened poverty situation and exacerbated the contradictions of rural underdevelopment. Again, cooking fuel is basically fire wood and most of the pots used for cooking are mud pots. Most of the rural families cannot afford stove or kerosene as cooking fuel. This situation is in line with Gujba, Mulugetts & Azapegic (2015) study that showed that 80% of Nigerian rural household cooking energy is derived from biomass, particularly fuel firewood. This practice does not only deplete rush rain forest but in the main add to air pollution in the community. Also, the sanitary habits of rural dwellers escalate environmental despoliation as well as engender health hazards in the communities. For instance, many rural dwellers still defecate in the bushes and surrounding waters. These practices contaminate the land, waters and exacerbate health crises.

iv. Increasing criminality, civil unrest and banditry: Unarguably, the level of criminality and conflicts in our rural areas has become unprecedented. This is a major consequence of social exclusion and alienation that have ravaged the rural communities. In most parts of rural Nigeria, criminality has degenerated into insurgency, banditry and terrorism. Issues that border on marginalisation, resource exploitation, deprivation, political manipulation, unemployment, hunger and starvation have been the drivers of conflagrations in the rural areas of Nigeria. A major outcome of poverty in the rural areas is the increasing incapacity of the state to contain the degenerating violence, brutality, kidnappings and wanton killings. The rural communities have not only been extremely traumatized, terrorised and pauperised, but as well displaced, from their ancestral habitation. The disruption of the economic (productive), social life including the family and traditional relationship have resulted in unimaginable poverty among the rural dwellers.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

We have in this paper tried to critically investigate the relationship between rural poverty reduction efforts and the avalanche of rural development programmes and policies in Nigeria. We set out to state our objectives which included: the determinants of rural poverty; the rural development policies and programmes geared towards rural poverty mitigation and rural development; and impediments to rural developments. We also clarified the concepts of rural development and rural poverty in line with our objectives in the paper.

We acknowledged the surfeit of the programmes and policies as well as the cascade of projects in the rural areas but are concerned that the poverty and crisis of underdevelopment dialectics in the rural areas remain unmitigated, and in some cases even exacerbate. This is our point of departure in this essay; that the problems of rural poverty and underdevelopment is less a deficit of rural development programmes and policies, than it is the faulty development approach and the witling away of resources by forces outside the control of policy implementers. This is not to say that there is no asymmetry between the deployment of resources and critical infrastructure/amenities between the cities and the rural areas. The question however is, why the imbalance in the first place? It is our contention that when development policies and projects are surreptitiously geared towards sustaining, protecting and promoting vested interests be they the ruling class, the politicians, the bourgeois contractors, rural farm kulaks; other than the targeted population, the consequences are poverty, marginalisation, hunger and underdevelopment. This has been the lot of the Nigerian rural dwellers and rural areas.

We articulated the consequences of rural underdevelopment as including: crises of housing and sanitation, health and nutrition disruption, environmental degradation, increasing criminality, banditry and terrorism. We conclude that if rural poverty and underdevelopment are not mitigated through a fundamental change in development policies and approach, it may exacerbate the already worsening crises of national development and nation building in Nigeria.

5.2 Recommendations

In consideration of the above conclusions, we make the following recommendations:

1. A holistic integrated approach towards rural development that will address effectively the entire spectrum of rural life including productivity, health, education, sanitation, housing and welfare;
2. There is the need to mobilise the productive potentials of the rural dwellers to increase the production of food and agro-based materials. This will alleviate the hunger and starvation currently ravaging the society;
3. The rural dwellers need to be politically imbued with high level of consciousness to be able to become full participants in the political activities both at the national and state levels. Their numerical strength will engender a better democratic society that enhance good governance
4. There is need to reinvigorate the bottom-up approach to rural development framework, so that the target group for rural developmental projects, will become part and parcel of the design and implementation processes;
5. There should be a deliberate programme of massive investment in modern basic infrastructure in the rural areas to redress years of neglect and improve the life of rural dwellers as well as modernize rural economic life. Such infrastructural facilities as roads, electricity, water, sporting and recreational as well as refuse disposal facility will not only attract investments, encourage government officials to reside in their areas of duties but will mitigate rural-urban migration;
6. Policies and programmes for poverty alleviation or rural development must be transparently, openly and credibly executed. Such programmes must be devoid of unnecessary bureaucratization, opaque and corrupt tendencies, so that intended beneficiaries will reap the full benefits of the development programmes. This has become imperative in an era when trust deficit between the office holders and the citizens has become unprecedented.

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