

Rural Infrastructural Development in Nigeria: Policies And Implementation Strategies

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Abstract

The search for the development of rural areas in Nigeria had led to the adoption of different strategies, oftentimes, reflecting the ideological learning of policy makers over time. This study derives from a concern with the arguably poor outcomes associated with most of these strategies. Using the descriptive-analysis approach, the study identifies policy implementation pathologies leading to failures of most of these strategies, and argues that there is an urgent need for ideological and philosophical re-direction in choosing strategies and implementation machinery for rural development.

An overview

The majority of Nigerians are rural dwellers. Though inadequacies of statistics make knowledge of actual rural - urban population distribution inexact, unadjusted projections still shows that Nigerians predominantly live in rural areas. Rural areas in Nigeria are unquestionably characterized by debilitating material poverty and alarming decadence of infrastructure, arising from a long period of sad neglect by policy makers. The central place of infrastructure in development efforts need not be overemphasized. Indeed, rural infrastructures constitute the substance of rural welfare and progress. Idachaba (1935) reminds us that efforts to raise rural welfare must necessarily go beyond the traditional and limited approach of raising per capita income through agricultural development projects, to the provision of rural basic needs: health and medical facilities, rural transportation facilities, electricity, pipe-borne water and schools. Beyond their roles as producers and sources of food and materials for urban dwellers, the rural dweller must be recognized, appreciated and entitled to good things of life like his urban counterpart. Successive governments in Nigeria recognized this fact, even if they did little beyond lip service in addressing this problem. To illustrate this fact, the Guidelines for Ute Fourth National Development Plan avers that:

In the past, there was a tendency to measure economic performance in terms of such aggregates as the GDP...etc. Though it is easy and convenient to do so, it is clear that such indices do not. Tell the whole story. The common man is more interested in such things as the availability of drinking water, housing units, medical facilities, educational facilities, good roads ... etc ... such information provides a good criterion for measuring development (Guideline for Fourth National Development Plan, 1981 -85:23).

For all intents and purposes, rural infrastructures are very critical for rural development and other equally important national programmes. For example, Idachaba (1985) discloses that the National Accelerated Food Production Programme, the Operation Feed the Nation, the Green Revolution and other governmental development projects have had limited success in many areas because of very poor infra-structural support. In recognition thereof, the Federal and State Governments have variously made commitments in this direction. A good example is found in the Third National Development Plan where the government declared that "... efforts will be made to enhance the quality of life in the rural areas through the provision of basic social amenities such as health centres, pipe-borne water, feeder roads and electricity (Vol. 1:292). The trend in government official position remains the same, even if these come to mere rhetorics and soapbox stunts. By virtue of the provisions of the 1379 and 1999 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria most aspects of the rural infrastructures are on the Concurrent Legislative List." in which case, they are joint Federal, State and indeed, Local Governments' responsibility. At this point, it will be useful to shed light on the place of specific infrastructures in rural development.

- Roads: Rural roads form the basis for transportation and communication. Rural roads consist of federal, state and local government roads (major, feeder, tracks, footpaths, bridges and culverts) found in the rural areas. Rural roads, perhaps, constitute the most critical infrastructure in the rural, and by extension, national development drive. Contributions of rural roads to rural development include: accelerated delivery of farm inputs and evacuation of produce; reduced costs in transportation in terms of human energy, costs of portage and times loss in trekking long distances; and facilitating more efficient distribution of goods and services between the rural and urban sectors.
- Water: Rural water supply across the country remains deplorable. Various governments - past and present - recognize the rural water supply problem. According to Idachaba (1995), average supplies of

pipe-borne water per capita for these states where data is available fall Within the range of 0.01 litres Enugu/Anambra (formerly Anambra) and 39.10 litres in Oyo State. Even if we exercise caution in making generalizations on the basis of these figures, it is Uncontrovertible fact that potable water is in short supply in our rural areas. The Second, Third, Fourth and subsequent National Development Plans continued to make references to the inadequacy of rural water supplies. To be sure, according to the Second National Development Plan:

In the rural areas, where inadequacy or absence of good water supply has been found to have a direct bearing on the spread of certain water-borne diseases, the strategy also would be to improve the quality and source of water supplies in these areas in order to reduce the incidence of such diseases(1970-74: 170). Rural dwellers, in most part, obtain their water supplies from a variety of sources, including wells, rain water, streams, rivers, lakes, etc. By and large, the quality of water from these sources proves grossly poor and inadequate.

- Electricity: Generally, rural electricity supply across the nation is grossly inadequate (see, Guidelines on Rural Electrification, NEPA). For reasons of low commercial/industrial activities and general life style in the rural areas, demand for electricity in these areas is largely dominated by lighting loads. Even then, these relatively low loads are hardly supplied. Rural electricity schemes in Nigeria show a mixture of NEPA and state/community supported facilities. Rural electrification schemes by Federal Government funded NEPA and state governments reflect a mixture of social, economic and political objectives, in most part. Accordingly, the emphasis was “to bridge the social and economic gap between in rural and urban areas...” Even though that “very limited progress has so far been made with respect to the Federal rural electrification scheme...” (Third National Development Plan: 180). The Guideline for the Fourth National Development Plan has this to say on rural electrification:

The National Policy on rural electrification reflects a mixture of economic and social objectives. On the social level, electrification will be an important factor in the effort to combat the rural exodus towards the urban centres by improving the conditions for rural dwellers. Electrification should also make it possible on the economic front, to set up small processing and manufacturing industries, thereby raising rural productivity, employment, income and standard of living. Federal and State governments have responsibility for rural electrification, the Federal Government, through the extension of the grid, while State governments install diesel plants. During the next Plan period, rural electrification programme schemes will be given increased emphasis as an important component of integrated rural development (1980-83:55).

The above policy statement speaks volume of the critical importance of rural electrification to rural and rational development. Beyond this policy pronouncements lies the problem of implementation. According to NEPA - the main implementation agency of the Federal Government - the objectives of rural electrification programme are to:

- (a) increase agricultural productivity by means of adequate irrigation and easy mechanisation;
- (b) Make the processing of agricultural products easy e.g, storage and preservation of primary crops
- (c) promote rural industries which would generally assist in raising the standard of living of the rural community; and
- (d) reduce migration from rural to urban areas (Policy Guidelines on rural Electrification: 4).

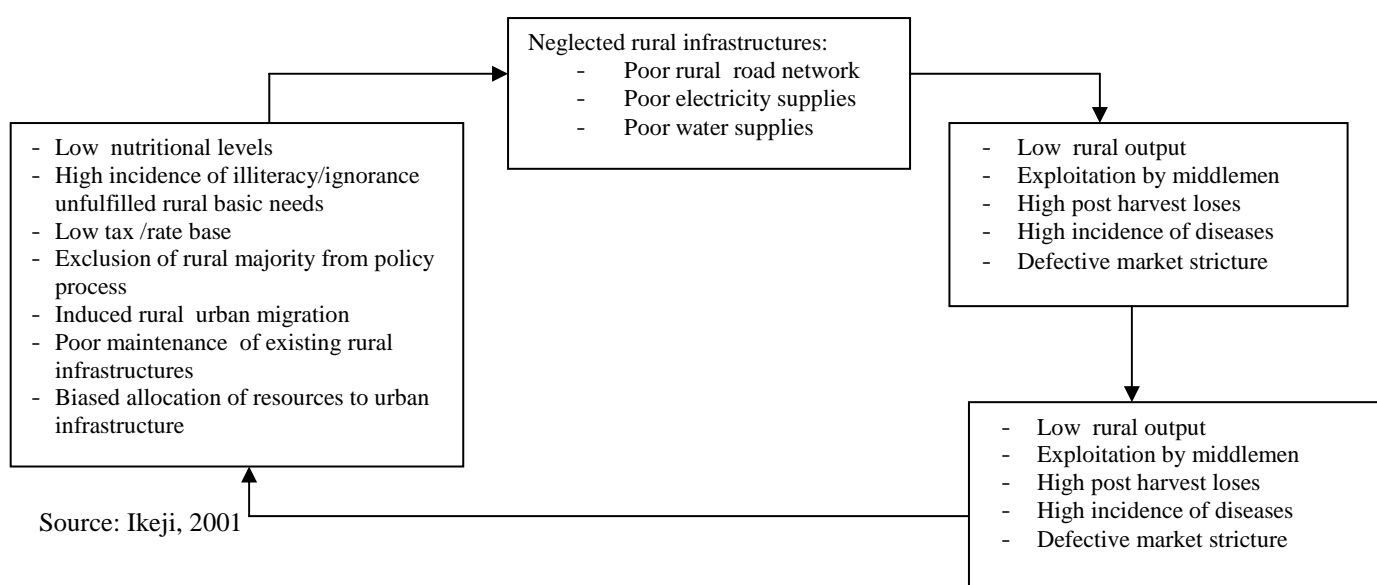
These lofty goals appear far-fetched going by the state of rural electrification across the country. One major reason for this may well be NEPA's strategy of employing financial viability criterion in its rural electrification programme, to wit, "that the present value of the net revenue derivable from any rural electrification scheme throughout its 20-year asset-life must, at least, be equal to the total cash outlays on the scheme over the same period of time (Guidelines on Rural Electrification: 3). All in all, the state of rural electrification in Nigeria leaves much to be desired, regardless of various half-hearted efforts on the part the Federal and State governments, and their agencies.

The necessary outcome of the overall poor state of rural infrastructure in Nigeria as shown above is further rural underdevelopment and decay. Figure 20.1 is a vicious circle Uniting poor rural infrastructures, to rural underdevelopment. As a way of breaking this vicious circle and thereby freeing the rural areas from, the clutches of underdevelopment, the Federal Government had embarked en a variety of programmes, the focus of which is the provision of rural infrastructures. These government-led programmes include the Agricultural Development Project (ADP). The River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDAs), and the Directorate for Food Roads, and Rural infrastructure (DFRRI)-Amore detailed discussion of the activities of these projects in rural infrastructure development will be in order.

The Agricultural Development Project (ADP)

Initiated and co-sponsored by the World Bank, the ADP programme employs an integrated approach to the development of agriculture and rural infrastructures as a way of raising the productivity and standard of living of the rural dwellers. The foundation for the programme was laid in 1969 when the Federal Ministry of Agriculture invited the World Bank to explore ways and means of promoting agricultural production in Nigeria. The result of this mission was the identification of some projects considered feasible and viable in which the World Bank could participate. These projects included the rehabilitation and resuscitation of cocoa production in the Western part of Nigeria; groundnuts, cotton, millet, guinea corn and cowpeas in the northern part of the country; and small-holder arid plantation oil palm schemes in the eastern part. The ADP experiment was built around the assumption that blending of factors such as technology, appropriate physical inputs, extension services, market and basic infrastructural facilities is essential for enhancing productivity and standard of living for the rural dwellers.

Fig. 1: A vicious circle linking poor rural infrastructure to rural underdevelopment



Thus, as an integrated programme, supply of appropriate agricultural inputs and development of vital infrastructures did not escape the attention of the ADP. To be sure, the ADP package included the development of rural roads, water projects, small dams, seed multiplication and farm service centres, farm-input distribution and extension services. Three principal actors fund the operations of the ADPs, namely

- i) the Federal Government by way of grants disbursed through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development:
- ii) the State Governments by way of grants to the projects and
- iii) the World Bank by way of loans.

It should be noted that for the phased ADPs, the burden of funding among these three principal actors is distributed in the ratio of 20 percent, 14 percent and 66 percent for the Federal Government, State Governments and the World Bank respectively (The Guardian. 25/11/86: 10-12). As far back as 1985, the ADPs had constructed some 6,787 kilometres of feeder roads - a figure, according to Obiukwu (1991), doubled by 1992. Reports, as at 1986, show that since inception the ADPs have between them provided rural infrastructures as fig. 2 shows. The information on the efforts of the ADPs in providing rural infrastructures is significant to this study, as this was the position of things just before the coming of the Direct Participation Scheme.

Fig. 2

Projects	Units/numbers
Feeder roads (constructed and rehabilitated)	7.178 kilometers and 7.178 kilometers
Boreholes	23,632 (Nos.)
Wells	686 (Nos.)
Washbores	973 (Nos.)
Tube wells	518(Nos.)
Farm service centres	601 (Nos.)
Development Training Centre	71 (Nos.)
Earth dams	101 (Nos.)

Source: A decade of progress in integrate rural development: focus on ADPs in Nigeria, The Guardian (25 Nov. 1986) Lagos, Nigeria.

The River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RERDA)

Nigeria's policy on RBRDAs had its nucleus from the initiatives of some states in instituting River Basin projects as far back as 1953 when the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) was commissioned to investigate the possibilities of establishing a pilot irrigation scheme on the Sokoto-Rima River Basin. By 1968, other agencies, particularly the UNESCO, were invited to carry out similar feasibility studies of other river basins by some other states of the federation. These initial studies materialised into the Sokoto-Rima, Chad Basin and Kadeja-Jamaare River Basin Development Authorities. As a development strategy, the RBRDAs were created to embark on a systematic exploitation of land and water resources that abound in the country. Besides being closely identified with local/rural problems at the grassroots, the authorities facilitated the smooth preparation and execution of projects, especially infrastructures that cut across state boundaries. In this regard, the RBRDAs were conceived not only as agents that spread the traits of development but also ones capable of fostering rapid development of the rural areas of the country.

It was in the light of the above considerations that on June 25, 1975, by Decree No. 25, the Federal Government set up eleven River Basin Authorities whose activities covered all the states of the federation. This decree was, however, replaced by Decree No. 87 of September 28, 1979, which in turn was amended by River Basins Development Authorities (Amendments) Act of 1st October 1981 (Cross River Basin News, No. 1, April-June, 1984:2) with the following duties and objectives:

- a) To undertake comprehensive development of both surface and underground water resources for multi-purpose use;
- b) To undertake schemes for the control of floods and erosion and for watershed management including afforestation;
- c) To provide water from reservoirs and lakes under the control of the Authority for irrigation purposes to farmers and recognized associations as well as for urban water supply schemes for a fee to be determined by the Authority concerned, with the approval of the Minister;
- d) The control of pollution in rivers, lakes, lagoons, creeks in the Authority's area in accordance with nationally laid down standards;
- e) To resettle persons affected by the works and schemes specified in this section or under special resettlement scheme;
- f) To develop fisheries and improved navigation of the rivers, lakes, reservoirs, lagoons and creeks in the Authority's area;
- g) To undertake the mechanized clearing and cultivation of land for the production of crops and livestock and for forestry in areas both inside and outside irrigation projects for a fee to be determined by the Authority concerned with the approval of the Ministers;
- h) To undertake the large scale multiplication of improved seeds, livestock and tree seedlings for distribution to farmers and afforestation scheme;
- i) To process crops, livestock products and fish produced by farmers in the Authority's areas in partnership with state agencies and any other person;
- j) To assist the state and local governments in the implementation of the following rural development work in the authority's area:-
 - The construction of small dams, wells and boreholes for rural water supply schemes and feeder roads

for the evacuation of farm products;

- The provision of power for rural electrification schemes from suitable irrigation dams and other types of power stations under the control of the Authority concerned;
- The establishment of agro service centres;
- The establishment of grazing reserves and
- The training of staff for the running and maintenance of rural development schemes and for general extension work at the village level (Cross River Basin News, No. 1, April-June, 1984:2).

The implication of the statutory functions listed above for rural infrastructure development is very obvious. Slight changes however, occurred in the structure and Organisation not functions, of River Basin Development Authorities. On May 8, 1984, the then Head of State, Major General Mohammed Buhari announced that the RSDAs were to be decentralised so that each Authority, would cover only one state of the federation except Lagos and Ogun States that were to share one Authority. Besides, the RBDAs were given extra responsibilities for rural development and were thus, re-designated as River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDAs).

Even though the RBRDAs were formally established by the Murtala/ Obasanjo regime, the project was vigorously supported and pursued by the Shargari and Buhari administrations which considered the scheme the nerve centre of agricultural and, more importantly, rural development. Apparently, the poor outing of the River Basin Scheme, with regard to development of infrastructures in the rural areas, paved way for the coming of the later day programme of infrastructural development embarked upon by the regime of General Babangida Code-named Directorate for Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI).

The Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure

In his 1986 budget speech, the Head of State, President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, announced the setting up of the near omnipresent Directorate for food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, (DFRRI). To any informed observer, the establishment by the Federal Military Government of the Directorate was a con-etc manifestation of the government's concern over the vexing issue of rural underdevelopment. According to General Babangida, the Directorate was an evidence of his administration's determination to evolve pragmatic measures to enhance the development of a national network of rural and feeder roads in or-n to strengthen the massive effort for food and agricultural self-sufficiency the shortest possible period (see, The Guardian, January 2, 1986:13). The DFRRI was established in all the states and local government areas of the Federation. The global approach marked a watershed and a significant departure from the strategies hitherto employed in dealing with the problem of rural infra-structural underdevelopment. According to the Chairman of the Directorate then, Air Commodore Larry Koinyan, three criteria were adopted in the operations of the Directorate, namely:

- i. equality of states
- ii. number of local governments; and
- iii. land mass and special ecological problems (See African Guardian, February 19, 1987).

Part of the mission of the Directorate we were informed, was to ensure that projects of roads (new and old ones which have been unwisely and illogically neglected), water supplies, and electrification of the rural communities must be vigorously and zealously prosecuted. In terms of Organisation, the Directorate was located in the office of the President and the office of the Governor in each of the states of the federation. The state governments had the responsibility of ensuring that various local governments and communities in their respective states benefit from the programmes of the Directorate. By virtue of the provisions of the Decree establishing the Directorate, its operations and activities are guided and supervised by a Board appointed by the President, consisting of a Chairman and not more than six other members. The equivalence of this Board was also established in the office of the Governor in each of the states to perform similar functions. Though he can appoint a Director or Co-ordinator to oversee the day-to-day operation; and administration of the programmes of the Directorate, the Governor was the Chairman and the effective head of the Board at the state level, which consists of not more than six other members. The equivalence of this Board was also established in the office of the Governor in each of states to perform similar functions. Though he can appoint a Director or Coordinator to oversee the day-to-day operations and administration of the programmes of the Directorate, the Governor was the chairman and the effective head of the Board at the state level, which consists of not more than fifteen persons appointed by the Governor, and representing public and private sector interests (see, DFRRI Decree No. 4 of 1987: A25-26). In more specific terms, the Directorate was charged with a variety of functions among which are:

- i. to identify, involve and support viable local community organisations in the effective mobilisation of the rural population for sustained rural developmental activities, bearing in mind the need for

- ii. promoting greater community participation and economic self-reliance of the rural community; to encourage contribution of labour, time and materials by local communities to be complemented by a system of matching grants from the Directorate, local and state governments;
- iii. to support the development of an information gathering, maintenance and evaluation culture in rural development programming, with emphasis on utilization of existing agencies with demonstrated competence in the area of management information systems in agricultural extension, including the continuous generation of basic data in rural infrastructure in each of the Local Government Areas in Nigeria;
- iv. to commission and support studies and research projects that will facilitate the execution of the functions of the Directorate;
- v. to liaise with Federal Government Ministries and Agencies in the design and implementation of programmes and projects in the field of food production and processing, rural water supply, road construction and maintenance and the provision of rural infrastructures, and any other rural development activities;
- vi. to supervise and monitor, on a continuous or regular basis, the entire range of rural development activities carried out or supported by the Directorate;
- vii. to develop a system of statistical and non-statistical reporting relative to local communities in order to measure the achievements of the Directorate in the area of food production, rural water supply, road construction and repair, rural infra-structural development and other rural development activities; and to do all such other things as will enable the Directorate more effectively perform its functions (see DFHRI Decree No. 4 of 1987: A26-27).

In keeping with the Directorate's goal of "developing the entire rural areas of Nigeria in order to improve the quality of life of the rural dwellers" (see DFHRI Decree No. 4 of 1987:A27) all local government councils were organized into committees to facilitate the activities of the Directorate. To be sure, in order to achieve the goal of rapid development, the Directorate was required to:

- i. encourage and organize increased agricultural and any other activities towards an increased earning power of the rural dwellers;
- ii. encourage increased agricultural and any other activities in the rural areas to provide agricultural and industrial raw materials;
- iii. undertake the construction and repair of roads to facilitate communication and distribution of agricultural productivity;
- iv. liaise with the appropriate Federal, State and Local Government agencies for the provision of water, health facilities, electricity, means of communication and such other things as the Directorate may determine within the rural areas; and
- v. enlighten the rural communities in order to give them a sense of belonging to the country (see DFHRI Decree No. 4 of 1987: A28).

As we shall see later, the Directorate, in addition, was enjoined to encourage communities to form unions which were envisaged to provide the platform for community participation in the implementation of rural development programmes initiated by the Directorate, the state and local governments (see DEFFI Decree No. 4 of 1987: A28). How far these lofty goals enumerated above were achieved across the country remain a concern to analysts.

Concluding Comments

Much had been said and written by way of appraisals, commentaries and criticisms with regard to the performance of the policies and strategies presented in the preceding sections of this work. The most immediate and observation arising from the issues concerning these policies and strategies they represent bold and ambitious efforts from 'above' in the history of Nigerian rural development drive. A safe conclusion to draw is that these 'government led' or 'Top-Bottom' policies and strategies have, from empirical standpoint limited impact in the onerous task of rural development in Nigeria, if the infrastructures in the rural areas is used as our parameter.

Evidence of unchanging rural stagnation and underdevelopment of infrastructure abound, regardless of these policies and strategies, the net being a steady slide on the living standards of the average rural dwellers. In terms of nominal and real income, urban-rural differential continue to grow for reasons not unconnected with the general state of underdevelopment of infrastructure. To be sure, social services that depends on functional infrastructural facilities remain a dream to many geographical areas; while many remain virtually inaccessible. The mainstay of most rural areas across the country - agriculture - remain, by modern standards, largely primitive;

and expectedly, has lost out to the urban areas in terms of the ever-increasing rural-migration trend. Analysis shows that a constellation of factors account for abysmally results recorded by these policies and strategies. It is a difficult task to discuss these factors comprehensively. We may, however, serve the purpose of this essay by presenting them briefly as follows:

1. Problems associated with corruption and bad politics in terms of p location, resource allocation, membership of policy boards, awards of contracts, etc.
2. Organizational inadequacies in terms of administrative capacity (staffing, planning, monitoring, evaluation, etc.).
3. Improper mobilization of the people (host communities) leading to a high level of non-compliant behaviour recorded in these areas.
4. Problems associated with setting over-ambitious and unrealistic target usually, not matched with sufficient resources.
5. Wasteful duplication of scarce energies and resources. Evidence of found in the pluralism of development agencies that have very s. goals and targets.
6. Lack of complementarity or organic backward-forward linkages bet the programmes at one level; and, at another level, between the programmes and the 'rural man' (with a propensity for traditional production methods) and the local governments who, though, are the poorest tier of government, had the largest responsibility for rural infrastructures.

It is pertinent to stress that nothing said in this essay denies whatever m success achieved by these policies and strategies. The position of this essay is that, all in all, the policies and strategies produced results which, at best remain a far cry from the expectations of its promoters and the people at large. A look at the underlying failure inducing factors outlined above offers us a cursory look at the policy implications of uncritical adoption of policies and strategies such as we examined in this discourse.

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