

TRENDS OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Given the tremendous explosions of urban settlements and the decadence of rural areas during the past two or three decades, the myth, reality and hope of a sustainable human settlement pattern seem to have been unraveled by the two UN Habitat Conferences of 1976 and 1996. Even though the wide range, tempting and unresolved human settlement issues have for long been grappled with by the public policies, solutions to the problems have continued to remain a mystery in Nigeria. Migration is not a recent human phenomenon. Over time however, human beings have moved and established settlements in dual albeit with stratified socio-economic and geo-political compositions called either 'rural' or 'urban'. This paper attempts to examine and analyze the general problems of development of urban and rural settlements in Nigeria as well as various shifts in policies and strategies contained therein. However, it shows how and why efforts are concentrated more explicitly on urban settlements. These top-down manifestations of the growth centre strategies with a 'trickle-down' pattern, either in a spontaneous or induced manner, have evoked a reminiscence of other development paradigms and the futility of the approaches adopted, which are urban and industrial in nature, externally oriented and characterized by a highly advanced and capital intensive technology. Thus, artificially created Nigerian urbanized settlements are therefore not free from the intricacies of international dependency position, masterminded by MNCs, sanctioned by the Nigerian State and collaborated by the political and economic elites.

Keywords: Rural-urban migration, Nigeria

Introduction

The trends, challenge and impacts of rural-urban migration have continued to generate great debates since the last three decades or so. Those moving from rural to urban areas constitute certain classes, categories and strata of the society that are basically plagued with certain social and economic problems in which poverty ranks highest and most fundamental. Debates on rural-urban gap have, since the 1960s, been one of the major focus areas that continued to produce insights on the precarious condition of people in both the rural and urban settlements with attendant consequences in many forms and dimensions.

Thus, rural-urban inequality, resulting in the phenomenal rural-urban migration, has become the prevailing orthodoxy in the conceptualizing the problems and trends of development policy and strategy in Nigeria. However, with the eclipse of the post-independence euphoria in Nigeria whereby the laid down expectations, hopes and visions were eluded and clouded with cynicism, apathy and despair whereas much have been officially expected but with little achievements.

With the evaporation of hope and enthusiasm within the socio-economic and political environment, the unfavorable economic conditions facing both the rural and urban habitats have, no doubt, completely degenerated and dilapidated to the extent of weakening the basic foundations of the economy. Even on the political angle alone, the situation is simultaneously affected by the complete breakdown of the political capacity to apply the expedient public policy measures to avert the impending political turmoil within an essentially hostile even though economic resource milieu.

Given the significant disparities that have emerged and developed between and within rural and urban settlements, migration phenomenon should be strategically used for the redistributive development dynamics; designed to solve problems usually associated with it: the problems that have emerged out of population pressures to handle or balance resource demand, resource availability and resource management.

While considerable attention and resources have been focused and expanded to improve the deteriorating condition of rural settlements with a view to alleviating poverty and reducing the spate or provocation of rural-urban migration, it is gratifying to note that even urban settlements are seriously hit by the plague of poverty, principally amongst the hitherto wage-earning class which has practically regressed from proletarians to peasant-proletarians. Thus, the reverse of the spiral of rural-urban migration has become the emerging trends and salient phenomenon in almost all the under developed economies.

Crisis in Rural Nigeria

There is no disputing or denying the fact that rural Nigeria is engulfed in chronic albeit with endemic crisis. The background to the crisis in Nigeria's rural areas and the socio-economic and political impacts of the crisis dates, at least, back to the colonial era. This was when colonialism exploited the resources of rural areas by thus increasing the levels of rural poverty and thus changing the entire structure of the rural economy. By enhancing or

even transforming the nature of land holding etc, it further affected the nature and system of social production and productivity, the social and physical provision of infrastructure, the ecology and labor force recruitment as well as worsening the overall poverty level amongst the rural residents.

Hence, the crisis in Nigeria's countryside centres essentially on productivity, food shortages, particularly for the urban parasites, and dwindled per capita income which, no doubt, manifest a serious crisis of poverty, apathy and despair within the rural communities. What is the nature and magnitude of this crisis? The nature and extent of rural malaise are, of course, immense and perhaps immeasurable. While rural poverty is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, it has nevertheless persisted despite the fact that the country is richly endowed in oil and other mineral resources.

Jamal and Weeks have noted that before the discovery and production of petroleum, Nigeria was a state characterized by a relatively narrow rural-urban gap, and therefore urban bias during that period was hardly a topical issue of debate. But with the emergence of oil as the main pedestal of the economy, urban oriented economy swiftly characterized the political economy and the public policy orientation. Urban privileged groups, but the wage earners, quickly monopolized and benefited from whatever gains that came along with oil, (Jamal and Weeks, 1993: 118).

As Nigeria is predominantly rural, less than a quarter of the 160 million Nigerians lives in towns or urbanized setting. While the trend in the Nigeria's oil economy is characterized by rural exodus, Nigeria's rural oriented economy with the vast majority of the population expending their labor force in agricultural pursuits, it is nonetheless characterized with migration economy based on the long history of Nigerian urbanization spree.

Whereas the nature of rural crisis in Nigeria has reached such an extent and degree that even the peasant has failed to produce enough food for him, let alone produce in excess to be appropriated by the state. Thus, food shortages, lower productivity, lower income and increased poverty have ravaged the rural Nigeria within a very short period of time. Even though these are partly and directly due to the inability of the peasants to have access to fertilizer for the predominant fertilizer responsive HYV crops, inputs and other infrastructural facilities. However, high marketing costs, labor shortages due to the rural-urban drift, infertile soils, pests, diseases due to the increased chemicalization of the soil and mechanization of agriculture have produced further impetus to new rural crisis.

Hence, since the Sahelian drought of the 1970s, rural Nigeria has continued to capture the attention of scholars on the unprecedented trends of rural poverty and its consequences on the rural residents and the national economy as a whole (Mortimore, 1989). But despite all the seeming attempts to alleviate rural poverty by both the state and international agencies through many ambitious and in most cases overzealous programmes they have nevertheless failed to transform rural life; either through agriculture or industrialization strategized either through the dualistic paradigms of ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’ development approach.

While a plethora of constraints could certainly be identified as factors responsible for the current rural malaise in Nigeria, the solutions seem to be as elusive as ever since both the domestic and international dimensions of the issue were completely jettisoned. Thus, the general embarrassment resulting from the failure to arrive at appropriate solutions to the problems has plunged the entire policies and strategies ineffective and ineffectual.

The structure of Nigeria’s rural economy has made it even more vulnerable with increased state intervention in the rural agricultural economy, particularly through the introduction of a variety of agricultural programmes and strategies. In addition, accelerated land alienation in the rural areas has accentuated rural crisis and therefore become a serious trend that affects the entire peasantry. Thus, with large tracts of land forcefully acquired by the state and held by the urban bourgeoisie in direct league with foreign partnership have been transformed into commercialized and mechanized farming. This constitutes one of the factors that brought about the state-peasant stand-off in the recent times. As the land so acquired is so extensive, the rural inhabitants have inevitably been transformed and turned into wage labor captivity particularly in the River Basin and Development Authority (RBDA) and Agricultural Development Project (ADP) areas where land had been acquired for diverse purposes.

With agricultural pursuits becoming more and more unbearable and unaffordable by the rural peasantry due to, among others, high costs of inputs, fertilizers, labor etc the peasants have, by and large, been systematically forced out of farming and to pathetically abandon farming by selling or mortgaging their farmlands to move out of the rural environment for the frivolous urban life, for wage labor and other lumpen-proletarian works. The Bakolori peasant revolt was a clear demonstration of a response on how the state actually alienated land from the peasant resulting in the 1980 peasant massacre by the state coercive agents.

Over time, the rural labor structure has experienced a radical change. The FOS labor force sample survey carried out between 1966 and 1987 indicated that 80 percent of rural dwellers were generally employed in agricultural activities. However agricultural employment in the rural areas dropped from 80 percent (1966 – 1967) to 65.5 percent in 1983. Furthermore, wage labor is predominantly in use with 50 percent seasonally acquired through migrant labor (FOS, 1966-1987). This, more often than not, indicates that

...of the migrant workers, 70 percentage had land in their places of origin where 30 percent were landless. Of permanent workers less than 10 percent had their own land, the rest being landless. (Bonat and Abdullahi 1989:169)

By 1985, the number of peasants that had been unsettled and rendered unemployed in the RBDA areas was as high as 500,000. However, between the 1970s and 1980s, the rural-urban migration of the rural labor force had completely shortened the agricultural pursuits and productivity in the Nigeria's countryside as what had predominantly been left to cater for land were mostly the aged women and children (Bonat and Abdullahi 1989: 169). This unsettlement resulted partly from the large scale projects undertaken as they were all accompanied with ecological upset in the fragile rural areas. The threat of desertification makes movement of the people inevitable. However the deforestation through woodland clearance makes soils to erode and land to deteriorate which also threaten people to live nearby and engage in productive activities.

While the crucial question of what is the nature and magnitude of rural crisis must be stressed, it should therefore be noted that rural communities in Nigeria have continued to suffer immeasurable crisis as manifested in multifaceted forms and dimension, crisis of nature, crisis of state intervention, crisis of maladjustment and so on *ad infinitum*. As poverty has become endemic, a norm rather than exception in Nigeria rural society, it has continued to persist over time, at least since colonialism while the decades of flag independence have not produced any concrete and tangible demonstration of its alleviation.

Thus, neither through programmes of development aids nor local drive for industrialization and transformation of agriculture has ameliorated the crisis from the rural sector of the economy even during the bubbling economy of the 1970s. The solutions so far advanced and implemented by the policy to the rural problems seem to be as elusive as ever.

Whereas the ecological constraints associated with low rural productivity, are generally caused by infertile soils caused sequel to their chemical pollution through intense application of fertilizers, pesticides etc, erosion sequel partly to intense deforestation in attempts to introduce new agricultural programmes like the large scale RBDAs, ADPs and dam constructions. Other ecological constraints consist of droughts and floods while pests and diseases are directly associated with public policy which sanction pollutions into the hitherto 'natural soils' relatively immune from the foreign incursions.

The crisis of labor shortages in the rural Nigeria is demonstrated and manifested by rural-urban migration, as rural ecological constraints become highly unbearable to the rural residents. However, what further bedevils the rural setting is the wrong diagnosis of the problems of the rural areas applied, which in turn produces the wrong results which is sequel to the faulty understanding of the problems in the first place. For example, the so-called traditional farm management is adduced to be the causal factor for the so-called technical backwardness, caused by the vicious circle of inputs scarcity and the ageing farm population without giving further impetus to the young in agricultural pursuits (Ajeagbu, 1976).

Consequently, the rural environment has become highly characterized by low or under-investments of resource. The result of this has invariably caused serious scarcity of credits thus bringing about low farm prices sequel to, among others, the vacillating price policies and unfavorable terms of trade between rural and urban sectors. However, the huge marketing costs, caused by inadequate rural infrastructures, have put further assaults on the rural condition of living. The worsening of the rural socio-economic condition is not only a crisis affecting it but the national economy per excellence.

While the direction of policies and attitudes, over time, of colonial and postcolonial regimes as well as the donor institutions has brought about a plethora of issues militating against the rural society, a catalogue of crisis has, by and large, emerged. These include the perfunctory public policy attention paid to the rural small-scale peasant farmers, particularly in the irrigated project sites which place too much emphasis and dependence on public investments with the large-scale enterprises and urban bourgeois farmers being the central focus.

But as against the advocacy for a change from the ‘economy of affection’ to the so-called capital intensive large scale economy characterized by export crops and machinery etc, the state interventions, over time, have been fashioned out on capital intensive projects without forecast to the social, economic and ecological consequences. Reforms on such interventions were, however, advanced towards the social provision of the basic human needs as advocated by the ILO, which in essence, has turned out to be a further modification of denials of rural needs despite the strong advocacy for the relative rural self-reliance and redistribution of resources equitably (Sandbrook, 1982).

The rural economy is, of course, broader than and therefore not synonymous to farming. Other ingredients that make up the entire rural economy consist of livestock production, forestry, fishing, marketing, hunting, services, manufacturing etc. Within this diversity of activities in the rural society, Mortimore succinctly shows the assumptions attached to the non-farm activities and their impacts.

...it often seems to be assumed that a decline in rural non-agricultural activity will accompany urbanization and the transformation of agriculture. but such an assumption does violence to the multifaceted structure of rural economies. Diversification is very much and is also ultimately related to ecology. (Mortimore 1989:2-3)

Even though the peasant mode of production has been outmoded, as it cannot make any dramatic change and increases in production and productivity, it is equally accepted that the introduced technology is highly inappropriate to the state of affairs of the rural realities or indigenous farming systems. In other words, the technology is highly inappropriate for the rural farming system and for the generality of the rural farmers whose understanding of the technology and resources is highly analogue to the generally accepted

designs of the transformation of rural society. The dependency nature of the rural environment on the urban policy and bureaucratic tangling has, however, produced undesirable constraints on the efficiency of labor and other productive processes.

It must be stressed that public policy on agriculture has by and large shown great disaffection towards the small scale farmers; particularly those on the rural areas, as the inputs, credits and other facilities concretely show its bias in favor of the large scale urban arm-chair farmers at the expense of the predominant peasant population. Thus, the improvement of the peasantry is, any way, an inevitable historical outcome the penetration of the capitalist forces into the countryside under colonial and past-colonial conditions. (Watts, 1983)

The Challenge of Urbanization in Nigeria

Urbanization is generally regarded as the transformation of areas with rural character into towns. It is, in other words the growth of towns from their hitherto statuses of rural settings. In an ideal and orthodox setting, such processes of urbanization should usually come along with industrialization through the establishment of factories and the expansion of employment opportunities, which ideally should however produce a thriving industrial town. The obvious relationship between urbanization and industrialization is the nexus of labor attraction not only in the commercial and manufacturing activities but more importantly in agricultural production.

Thus, as the conditions of opportunities expand in the urban areas, they, however, dialectically worsen in the rural areas as people are continuously attracted into the urban areas where they are dangerously forced to abandon rural life to seek a means of frivolous livelihood in the towns. The rural residents apparently see the attractiveness in the towns with seeming better opportunities. But in actual reality, many people abandon rural life in preference to the crowded and often substandard, squalor and shanty housing in the towns where they cannot find suitable employment opportunities (Gadd, 1976: 1). What provokes such rural residents to uproot their places for such urban life can be better appreciated in policy analysis.

The Nigerian population has continued to steadily grow from about 20 million in 1931 to 32 millions in 1952/53 and to some 56 millions in 1963. However, the 1973 census was cancelled due largely to its political content and agitation for its cancellation. The 1991 census put Nigerian population at more than 88 million. Currently, Nigeria is more than 150 million inhabitants (Nigeria, Population censuses) with large urban centres. While most of the urban centres are in great disarray with vast slumps, Nigeria's great majority of urban workers live with inadequate facilities. One therefore wonders whether these sectors, characterized with squalor features etc, are indeed within the Nigerian urban area planning. These areas consist, inter alia, of poor roads, lack of water supply, poor sanitary condition and in most cases, without electricity supply.

Other grave problems bordering on social issues faced by urban Nigerians include inadequate job opportunities which give rise to growing incidence of insecurity; resulting from crimes, theft, house breaking, armed robbery etc – as the only attractive options left to those who cannot legitimately make ends meet to sustain themselves. However, even those legitimately employed engage in intense fraudulent activities because the condition has forced them to find that crime is necessary in order that they may continue to afford to live in the high – priced urban areas (Adedeji & Rowland, 1973: xi)

The challenge of urbanization is, without disputes, the challenge of the future. A practical solution to the challenge of urbanization is, on the other side of the coin, the empirical solution to the rural problems. It has been explicitly shown that:

... the problems of urbanization are the problems of the young on whom the future progress of our country depends. It is the youth who are rejecting the rural life for the attractions of the urban areas. It is the youth who arrive with high hopes in the urban areas for a better way of life. It is the youth who are most greatly disillusioned when no jobs, no housing, inadequate services and all too few prospects for a better way of life, await them in the town. It is in our youth that the crisis of expectations is at the highest and the disappointment and frustrations will be most heavily felt. And it is the youth whose morals are put at greatest risk. In failing our youth we fail ourselves and our country (Adedeji and Rowland, 1973: xii).

The challenge of urbanization intrinsically challenges the rural question as the dual settlement patterns are the two sides of the same coin which neither the rural nor the urban can be divorced from each other. Thus, any design to transform one area without the corresponding and relative attempt to improve the other is likely to produce undesired results. For example, whenever attempts are made to improve urban areas alone that in themselves will cause some movements of people from the rural areas.

Put differently, any design and strategy to improve the urban condition must therefore correspond with similar or relative design and strategy to improve the rural situation. To stamp out the prevalence of rural urban migration, a relative and proportionate 'balance' in design and strategy of rural and urban development must be made and enforced within the entire development plans. Urbanization process in Nigeria has continued to increase with rapidly growing problems in all parts of the country. As the pace of urbanization has indicated that with 54 towns in 1952 whose total inhabitants was 3.1 million, each town with a population of 20,000 and above, the growth shows that by 1963 the population jumped to 10.7 million and the number of towns of such size rose to 183. During the same period, however, the percentage of Nigerians living in towns (20,000 and above) was 19 but if 5,000 and above was by 1963 regarded as being an urban then about 55 percent of Nigerians could be considered urbanized (Adedeji and Rowland,1973:7).

Such rapid growth of urbanization in Nigeria has its inherent negative implications in social, environmental, economic, political and other dimensions. While the social implication of congestion and over-crowding are obvious or certain, the inadequacy of all sorts of services cannot be ruled out. Such urban setting inevitably brews incidence of violence, robbery and social vices like prostitution. The conglomeration of people from diverse ethnic and cultural groups also brings about struggles and conflict between them in the political or even economic arena, which raises tensions between the interest parties.

The challenge of urbanization is immense and critical to both the government and people. To overlook problems associated with the accelerated pace of urbanization will ultimately accept the worsening condition of the rural areas when mass drift from the traditional rural environment goes on unabated to the urban areas. The failure of government to halt these trends of mass movement of people to over-crowd the urban areas with other associated implications is catastrophic. If there is a need to plan and deal with urban problems, it automatically necessitates planning for the rural areas since both areas are symbiotic and interwoven. It is shown however that:

... In virtually all the existing urban areas of Nigeria, the level of basic essential services to the community is inadequate...The services is a daunting one; the scope of the challenge is enormous and some of the resources – trained manpower, technical know- how and finance – are in very short supply (Adedeji and Rowland, 1973:14)

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa; one of the most fast growing population in the world and with one of the fastest and dramatic pace of urbanization trends during the last three decades. Such an overwhelming urban population is not indeed peculiar to Nigeria but a worldwide phenomenon. Nigeria, with its large diversity in social structure, cultural heritage and economic endowments has all the potentials for rapid urbanization with inherent depletion of rural areas.

Whereas urbanization process must never be oblivious of and divorced from rural consideration, it implies that any strategy to improve urban centres must similarly be equitably matched by a corresponding rural development essentially designed to prevent any provocative immigration influxes into the urban areas. It should be noted however that even in planned circumstances and with practical measures to relatively improve rural conditions, migration trends into urban areas, no matter the scale, are unavoidable. In situations where plans and measures are not taken into consideration, it is expected that a growing influx of people from rural to urban areas would be unprecedented.

Thus, as the growth and explosion of urban settlements are universal phenomena, the continuing trends of urbanization in Nigeria are incessant and endemic. Nigeria is thus rapidly changing from an agricultural and rural society to a highly urbanized country. Since the twelve-state structure of 1967 to the present thirty-six, Nigeria's urbanization spree has varied between different areas. Even though Nigeria is predominantly rural, the impact of urbanization, all over the country, is continuously being felt as the newly created state capitals, in particular, continue to pull out rural and other groups of people from both urban and semi-urban areas into such locations which constitute vital points of rapid urban development.

During the 1970s, Nigeria was confronted with the challenge of reconstruction rehabilitation and reconciliation in the war ravaged areas. However, other socio-economic development were designed and executed throughout the country. This no doubt involved the state direct involvement of resettlement and movement of people from different parts of the country. It should be recalled that the 1970s were the unprecedented years of great oil revenues which also coincided with the rapid population explosion and urbanization process on the one hand and rural depletion which was accompanied by large influxes of people into the urban area on the other. As such mobility trends in the population were unhealthy, “the eventual distribution had very adverse consequences for the space economy and for the people themselves both in towns and the country” (Ajaegbu, 1976:9) Thus, the changing population characteristics in both the rural and urban habitats had their own distributional dynamics and impacts.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the population distribution in Nigeria revealed that the highest concentrations of population were located largely in the southern part of the country, particularly in Lagos, Ibadan, Port-Harcourt etc. High density distribution could also be found in the Northern part especially in Kano and Zaria. The central issue of the implications of these patterns of population distribution centres on pressure on resources, particularly on agricultural land, threat to food security, housing, urban land use and infrastructure amenities, employment etc. which their availability and provision are always diminishing.

The tempo of urbanization and its challenges in Nigeria have continued to widen over the years. This development has significantly affected the proportion of distribution of the urban and rural populations. Mabogunje estimated that between 1951 and 1953 the rate of urbanization in Nigeria was about 5 percent per annum (Ajeagbu, 1976: 32). But by 1963, the rate of urban population in the country had risen to 8 percent per annum. However, the growth of large urban centers has been phenomenal and thus many urban areas were actually growing at much faster rates by doubling their populations within an interval of a decade (Ajeagbu, 1976:32).

In Nigeria, the process of urbanization has remained the on-going trends since time immemorial. The origins of many towns can therefore be traced back to the middle ages while many are of pre-European origin; a few were created by colonialism. The pre-colonial towns were self-sustaining in all respects; sufficient in food supplies with large track of farming areas within the cities, large markets, effective local processing, transporting, storage, wholesale and retail purchasing etc. With the spatial extensive process now going on throughout the country, particularly since the 1960s when modernity took over the traditional

trends and the expansion of the economy, the towns have been transformed to perform new functions. In essence however, the process of urbanization offers a variety of socio-economic options to those attracted into the towns, particularly those from the rural village or traditional kinship system.

... While they are in many aspect divorced from their traditional family support base, they are at the same time exposed to modern economic systems and industrial technology very different from what they have hitherto been used or equipped for. This exposure is by itself a very useful result of urbanization (Ajeagbu, 1976:34)

However, it is further shown that:

For some of these people who are often ill-equipped for urban employment or the urbanized economy, the initial confusion and the disappointed expectations especially about employment and other opportunities following their immigration into the towns, eventually give way to favorable responses to the new challenges (Ajeagbu, 1976:34).

Even if urbanization process offers some opportunities to others and responds favorably, a great number suffers from the modernizing effect of urbanization, especially those whose stay is longest and were initially involved in the challenges and stresses of urbanization (Ajeagbu, 1976:34). An important implication for urbanization process in Nigeria is the urban-rural relationship, particularly on the influences urban centres exert on the rural hinterland by drawing the rural inhabitants through migrations. Thus, the emerging urban spatial system in Nigeria, particularly within the context and process of urban development policy, has since the 1960s been enhanced.

The enhancement of such a system came largely due to, among many others, policy making and the socio-economic behavior and responses of the rural-urban immigrants as well as the tempo of the urban explosions (Ajeagbu, 1976:53). For example, in 1963, there were 24 urban centres in Nigeria each with a population of 100,000 and above whereas there existed 55 towns each with a population of 50,000 inhabitants or more. Furthermore, there were 183 towns with 20,000 or more inhabitants each which as a whole became the concentration of 10.7 million inhabitants (Ajeagbu, 1976:53).

One of the greatest challenges of urbanization, particularly in this century is the amazing and astonishing shifts in the trends of the population movements. It is shown that in 1990, “only one person in eight lived in an urban area, today half of the world’s people live in cities (Tinker, 1988: 34). The great challenge faced by all the urban areas globally is, no doubt, the challenge of food production which is erroneously regarded as rural because of the further erroneous belief that urban areas are only centres of commerce and industry.

As the venue for all agricultural experimentation in all the under developed regions has been rural, all large scale farms, innovative agricultural extensions, research programmes focus largely on rural areas and rural peasants as their laboratories and experimental agents and tools respectively. Urban emphasis in food production has been very narrow in focus largely because of its stigma as commercial and manufacturing centres. The issue of food and feeding of the teeming city populations has received a perfunctory attention. This is partly adduced to the misconstrued inclination for the urban areas which are planned to “follow the complex, highly capitalized, and energy consuming supermarket model of food distribution commonly found in more industrialized societies” (Tinker,1988: 4-5).

Issues in Nigeria’s Rural Environment

Despite the rapid growth in the urbanization process, Nigeria is predominantly a rural environment. Nigeria’s attainment of flag independence in 1960 has, within more than three decades, attempted varied strategies for rural development which none has been successful (Abbass, 1977). Rural society over time and within such strategies has continued to be neglected and ignored. The chronic and alarming circumstances and influences surrounding the rural Nigeria present a picturesque of threats to future human settlement. The nature of the rural condition vis-à-vis the abundant resources is thus a paradox.

Threats to a sustainable development by transforming the rural setting have been set over time through the nexus of the state public policy and the intricacies of state power through the political economy in determining and undermining control of the means of production and class interests. Hence, the advocacy of social scientists, physical planners and other scholars on the imperative of rural societies in the dynamics of the overall societal sufficiency and development has never been in dispute. Such an advocacy further argues that the economics and other issues of rural “behavior and interest of the state are better analyzed and understood within their political context”(Abbass,1997:12) or socio-political rationale and socio-economic implications. Abbass further succinctly shows that:

... Another decisive component of Nigeria’s rural environment is situated within the confluence of the IMF-World Bank structural Policies side-by-side with the intrinsic and complementary oil-based political economy. This consequently throws the rural society in an embarrassing situation of agricultural decay; culminating in food imports. The tragedy is that huge resources expended, in the name of rural development, have been disastrously poured disproportionately under the guise of providing basic needs; whereas the crucial role of NGOs play in transforming rural environment, has only received a perfunctory attention (Abbass,1997:12).

Designed policy approaches to rural development based on the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ have collapsed and therefore turned out to be frustrated options with in-built structural barriers. As both the policies are direct manifestations of the political economy, they invariably cannot stand the test of time and solve the issues addressed. Rural areas in Nigeria are currently confronted, more than ever before, with serious problems ranging from the general under – development and social backwardness to the specific infrastructure deficiencies, impoverishment, widespread poverty and hunger, illiteracy, unemployment as well as apathy and despair. With the worsening of rural life, however, it has been shown that:

... The structural changes from agricultural to petroleum economy particularly from the 1970s, when the former was neglected and relegated to the background, led to massive rural urban migrations at an unprecedented scale. Thus, the results of these changes, particularly in the 1990s, indicate that a far greater number of people, more significantly in the urban areas, cannot adequately feed themselves and are therefore faced with increased insecurity, widespread diseases and criminal activities. (Abbass,1997:15)

While rural marginalization and neglect have been the central theme of urbanization programme in Nigeria, it should be stressed that these are the direct embodiments of the unserviceable neo-classical economic theory which makes the apparent policy objectives of rural development inconsistent with the rural needs. Thus, the disparities between the town and the country, inserted with the development policy, have continued to impede rather than facilitate the development of the rural as well as urban areas particularly in providing a range of social welfare for the two habitants. The vicious circle within the predominant strategies makes it crystal clear. It indicates that the urban biased strategy has only designed to incorporate or upgrade rural areas with urban features.

... The design to incorporate rural areas with semi-urban features is rooted in the perception which suggests that the establishment of institutions, structures, agencies etc. per se, would automatically provide the basic needs of rural dwellers and then solve the problem of poverty. Therefore, efforts to raise rural welfare must move from mere extension of urban physical appearance to rural areas as models of development since urban areas are not devoid of features of rural life – abject poverty and deprivation (Abbass,1997:17-18)

The perennial rural poverty, rural class formation, class fractionalization and class struggles are other salient issues embedded within the given rural development strategies, which have rarely been the focus of attention. The plight of rural dwellers has to be situated within such important paradigms in order to capture and understand the issues involved in proper perspectives. Hence, the intensification of spatial inequalities, narrowing accessibility to basic necessities and heightening of rural gap has inevitable and irreversible class content. It is not therefore by accident, but by design, that there exist heavy concentrations of facilities in the urban centres to benefit a few urban elite groups.

The Ecology of Rural Urban Migration

We are here specifically concerned with the ecological aspects arising from the provocative movements of people from rural to urban areas and the emerging trends and issues therein. Thus, what provokes such rural “people to uproot their homes to live in apparently less desirable and strange surroundings?” (Gadd 1976:1). What is the general behavior of such people in the process of such movements and its aftermath, particularly the settlement aspects, its nature and means of livelihood? What, after all, will be the impact of the expanding population on the urban settlement on the one hand and the rural communities or habitats on the other? These rural and urban ecologies are very crucial in understanding the extent of rural-urban migration.

More than ever before, rural areas in Nigeria are currently confronted with serious problems ranging from the general state of underdevelopment, social backwardness to the infrastructural deficiencies, impoverishment, widespread poverty and hunger, illiteracy unemployment as well as apathy and despair. With the worsening or erosion of rural life, however, and added to the fact that market economic orientation and behavior are being vigorously embraced coupled with the state policy of reducing or withdrawing all sorts of subsidies, life, everywhere, is made more miserable, hard and unbearable, particularly for the rural residents and rural immigrants who are forced out of rural environments, floating between rural and urban areas.

This floating population, after uprooting their habitats in the rural areas, cannot establish permanent home and make life easy, for themselves and others, in the urban areas. As the new or expanding economic growth is the powerful pulling magnetic force that attracts rural population into the urban areas, the hopeless, brutish rural life is the force pushing them to flood the magnetic urban areas.

Rural pressures, essentially those centred on social infrastructural amenities; but to some extent on land especially where there exists high rural population densities and particularly where state intervention in agricultural programmes have assaulted the life of the peasantry, are endemic and highly colossal which however affect pressures on food supply and the threat to feed the family with an inevitable option to move out to the urban centres for the lumpen-proletarian jobs.

By 1970, for example, Ajaegbu had shown that the average population densities in Nigeria within the main areas of rural population pressures range from about 300 persons per square miles (115 per km²) in the Northern parts of the country to over 900 persons per square miles (345 per km²) in the Southern parts as exhibited in Table 1. Whereas the overall national average density was, as at the time, about 500 person per square miles (190 per km²), it implied that where the rural densities per square miles were 500 persons (200 per km²) or over, pressures on resources were more and more experienced (Ajaegbu, 1976).

Table 1- Estimated Percentage of Population and Areas Experiencing Pressure on Land (Rural)

REGION	% Under Pressure		Average Densities in Areas	
	Population	Area	Mile	Km
6 Northern States	39.8	13.7	306	116
3 Eastern States	65.6	31.3	925	652
3 Western States	43.8	14.1	941	358
Total	46.5	15.2	480	182

Source: Estimates by Ajaegbu and Hance, 1970

Population mobility can generally be categorized or classified into various forms of migration trends. In the first place, it emanates from highly density areas to other higher density locations. These trends suggest that the receiving areas are resourcefully buoyant with enhanced or increased opportunities. The other one takes place, as usual, from the pressured rural areas to the urban centres. However, migratory trends also occur from low resources and high density and pressured rural areas to sparsely settled, high resource rural

locations. On the rare occasions however, pressured urban areas force some groups of people to move to resource – based low density rural areas to rid themselves off from the rigors of urban frivolities.

As the availability and distribution of resources have a direct relationship with the concentration and distribution of population, rural-urban migration implies that economic or material expectations and opportunities of the migrant rural peasants could be obtained and achieved from such resource available and resource distributed urban areas. The propensity therefore to migrate from the pressured rural areas is even the more when the destinations are assumed to provide the social, economic and other prospects anticipated.

As rural-urban migration is not prompted in search of agricultural land, the greater concentration of the immigrants abandon farming by being transformed as wage earners. This trend in migration does not alleviate rural pressures or enhance the utilization of the dormant rural resources but at the same time precipitate more urban pressures and subsequently the creation of the satellite settlement at the fringe of the urban centres. It should be stressed that the condition of rural migrants into the urban suburb, predominantly occupied by low wage earners, cannot be measured in any way higher than the rural peasantry. Furthermore, even the socio-economic condition of the large urban dwellers has remarkably regressed beyond the poverty line leading to the evaporation of the hitherto ‘middle class’ within the socio-economic settings and realities of societal impoverishment or state of poverty.

At this juncture, it is important to take a cursory look at the proportional distribution of population between the rural and urban areas. By 1970s, for example, and based on the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) estimates, about 85 percent of Nigerians lived in predominantly rural settlements whereas less than 10 percent lived in towns which possessed a population of 50,000 or more. However, as demonstrated in Table 2, it can be observed that the average increase of the population of urban residents was about 20 percent living in 183 towns with 20,000 inhabitants or more (Ajeagbu,1976). With the explosion of urban settlements and depletion of rural areas since the 1970s and the prevailing socio-economic situation in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s both the two settlements have witnessed unprecedented stressed and constrained conditions, resulting in urban environmental degradation on the one hand and rural decay on the other.

The trends of rural-urban migration are structurally focused on poverty. Thus, poverty over time, has gradually shifted from rural to urban areas and has become more indigenous and well rooted in urban than rural areas. In Jamal and Weeks, it has been argued and shown that as poverty has become more urbanized, “the wage earning class has practically disappeared as a distinct entity and there has been an astonishing information of the urban labor market” (Jamal & Weeks,1983:xiii). This is, accordingly, sequel to swift changes in the harsh behavior of the economy, which also provokes rural-urban migrations. The blunted distinctions between rural and urban sources of income have indicated that both urban and rural poverty are two sides of the same coin which however feed or depend on each other. It is further argued that:

Table 2- Urban and Rural Population by Provinces, 1970

Province	Total Pop ('000)	Urban Pop*	Urban Pop. As % of Total Pop	% Pop. Living in
Sokoto	4335	89817	2.1	97.9
Niger	1399	11590	0.8	99.2
Zaria	1553	103694	6.7	93.3
Katsina	2545	90538	3.6	96.4
Kano	5775	147841	2.6	97.4
Adamawa	1585	92230	5.8	94.5
Bauchi	2476	38014	1.5	98.5
Borno	2854	51779	1.8	98.2
Sardauna	878	28090	3.2	96.8
Benue	2642	53967	2.0	98.0
Plateau	1362	22738	1.7	98.3
Ilorin	1119	208546	18.7	81.3
Kabba	1280	31495	2.4	97.6
Abeokuta	975	27300	28.0	72.0
Ibadan	3327	627379	18.8	81.2
Ijebu	576	68543	12.0	88.0
Ondo	2728	74343	2.7	97.3
Oyo	1882	112349	6.0	94.0
Benin	1355	129239	9.5	90.5
Delta	1181	116261	9.8	90.2
Ababaliki	1245	31177	2.5	97.5
Enugu	1452	138457	9.5	90.5
Onitsha	1492	455122	30.5	69.5
Owerri	2310	218354	9.4	90.6
Umuhia	970	169761	17.5	82.5
Annang	796	38107	4.7	95.3
Calabar	269	76410	28.3	71.7

Ogoja	357	151487	42.3	57.7
Uyo	1961	14470	0.7	99.3
Degema	401	231491	57.6	42.4
Port- Harcourt	834	95768	11.5	88.5
Yenagoa	310	72765	23.5	76.5
Lagos	665	665246	100.0	0.0
Colony	778	442000	56.8	43.2

***Settlement with 20,000 or more inhabitants. Source: H. I. Ajaegbu (1976)**

...Even if rural poverty should be statistically more important its root cause may still lie in the poverty and resulting lack of effective demand in the urban sector; the reverse may also apply. Any policy on poverty worth its name would have to attack both locations of poverty simultaneously (Jamal&Weeks,1983:xvi).

If we take and focus on the urban bias analysis that has for long been the main staple of analysis, recent revelations or developments within the socio-economic gap between the rural and urban areas have demonstrated the gap between the residents of both areas not as spectacular and striking as had been clamored and agitated for. As a matter of fact, income gap has even turned in favor of the peasant farmers against the urban or even the salary or wage earners (Jamal and Weeks,1983:xv). This was sequel to the dramatic changes that radically altered the rural-urban relationship and the income differentials that had come into being since the 1970s.

Urban bias had become an epitome of development strategies clinched with the state policy making and thus predominantly conceptualized in literature. This urban bias thesis centrally focuses on the rural victims and urban beneficiaries within the surplus generation and transfer, allocation and distribution between the two sectors whereas the highest concentration and centralization of power and resources are in the urban areas.

One of the astonishing features of Nigerian social setting is the wide inequalities that continues to exist between the town and the country; caused primarily by the state policy overtime through various interventions and other economic measures in not only wealth distribution but also resource allocation and management to the two sectors. However, the remarkable insights of rural-urban inequalities are those that can be gleaned from the inequality that exists between the urban wage earner and the rural farmer. This will settle part of the serious contentions and issues bordering on rural-urban disparities and rural-urban

migration. Even though these issues affect agricultural productivity, they are nonetheless wide, dangerous and detrimental to both rural and urban settlements and their sustainability since migration is a provocative response to economic gap and insecurity.

During the 1970s, the petroleum ‘devil increment’ not only brought about expanded growth but at the same time set in trouble, waste and corruption which continue to be drowning the ship of the nation. These were part of the economic shocks that radically and astonishingly altered the urban-rural relationship in Nigeria during that period, the relationship altering the rural-urban income differentials thereby worsening condition of life in the former more devastating than in the latter as those who have migrated and settled or floated at the fringes of the urban centres as well as the wage earners are worse-off in terms of actual per capita income than those in the rural areas. Thus, the focus of farm-wage gap is relevant in understanding the efficacy of the trends of rural migration. As real wages have practically fallen, the decline in employment has been widely recorded.;

... living standards of the urban workers and peasants have drawn closer... urban poverty now rivals rural poverty in intensity and extent. The falling wages in urban areas have endangered profound changes in urban economic structure. No longer is urban wage sufficient to support an average size family in town...(Jamal and Weeks,1883:4).

Thus, the scuttling trend of rural-urban migrations is imbued with serious implications. Invariably, the rates of rural-urban migrations are consequent upon the state deliberate neglect of the basic needs of rural residents. The problems associated with population influxes are, more often than not, accompanied by overcrowding and squalor living that has provoked the soaring tension and instability in both the urban and rural settlement patterns. Therefore, as these problems have increased additional pressures on urban habitat bordering on services like health care, water supply, waste disposal, transportation and educational facilities, the growing number of lump proletarians has consequently worsen the unemployment rate and agricultural productivity in the urban and rural sectors of the economy. All these have contributed in the swelling crime rates, political turmoil, violence etc.

While the problems of poverty are squarely the prime factors pricking the rural-urban exodus, the infrastructures relatively placed on the urban centres with the abysmal provision in the rural areas constitute other crucial trends. Rural development policies and strategies can only be sustained only when provision, operation and maintenance of appropriate infrastructures are geared towards creating an atmosphere of socio-economic realism. The technocratic reformist character or behavior of Nigeria's rural development policy has, no doubt, hindered the provision and sustenance of rural infrastructural amenities.

Rural societies exhibit palpable contrasts with the urban settlements, particularly in the provision and maintenance of infrastructures. Nigeria's over 115 million people are largely rural residents and thus the rural-urban distribution of amenities shows a lopsided balance against the predominantly rural population. This trend therefore demonstrates that urban policies and preferences, under the pretext of rural development in Nigeria, have dominated the public proclamations and pronouncements of the political leadership in the false slogan of rural transformation, poverty alleviation etc. This goes on to show that:

... rural setting must intrinsically be linked with the urban social conditions since the former exists in a symbiotic pattern with the latter. In other words, the dialectics of rural-urban relationships show that the growth of urban areas and the well being of the inhabitants automatically dwarf rural settings and dwellers in all ramifications; as problems and deplorable conditions of rural communities are intrinsically or dialectically associated with urbanization or vice-versa. (Abbass, 1994)

The orthodox belief which suggests that the traditional approach of rural development through agriculture must be shifted and discarded. To recognize rural communities as only food producers within the economy is misleading. Thus rural societies must be equally recognized to be equally entitled to all other amenities not necessarily agricultural implements alone. In this vein therefore, Sandbrook shows that:

... any policies that arguments urban bias is likely to compound the poverty problem. Relevant here is the paradox that effort to expand urban employment ... with stagnant rural areas will increase urban greater migration to the relatively prosperous cities. (Sandbrook, 1982:18)

While the transformation of rural communities is greatly influenced by the type, quality and quantity of facilities provided and the regularity of their maintenance, such infrastructures like that as sources of water supply, environmental sanitation, educational and literacy condition, nutritional and other socio-economic life of the rural society must be focused on their sustainability and viability. It must be emphasized that the provision, operation and maintenance of rural infrastructures greatly prevent or at least reduce the phenomenal rural-urban migration; a trend always accompanied with serious socio-economic and political repercussions.

Development plans and the provision of rural infrastructures since 1946 have not been geared towards a satisfactory meeting of the basic needs of the rural residents. The second development plans 1970-74, for example, were confronted with a very high level of unemployment and under-employment in the countryside. It should be noted that this was the period of the apogee of oil revenues in Nigeria. The plan document however recognized the poverty and poor conditions of the rural society which culminated in the formulation of policies towards ensuring adequate food supply. All these were designed to meet the quality and quantity standards for the increasing population, production of agricultural raw materials for exports and for domestic agro-based industrial manufacturers as well as creating rural employment opportunities designed to reduce the prevailing rural-urban migration. It should be noted that the strategies to achieve such objectives further exacerbated the rural problem.

It was only during the third development plans 1975-80 that the government made its first official statement on rural development planning in the following declaration.

...The main objectives of rural development are to increase rural productivity and income, diversify rural economy and generally enhance the quality of life in rural areas. Since agriculture constitutes the predominant form of activity in rural areas, the most important instrument for achieving these objectives are the agricultural programmes of both the Federal and State Governments (Nigeria, 1975 : 405).

Due to the serious disparities between the rural and urban areas in the provision, operation and maintenance of infrastructures, the plan document further declared that:

... Another aspect of balanced development of the rural and urban areas have lagged behind the urban areas in development, resulting in increasing disparities between standard of living in the rural and urban areas and the mass migration of population from the former to the latter (Nigeria,1975:30).

With the further widening of the gulf of inequality between the rural and urban centres, urban biased development strategies have continued to characterize development plans resulting in the imbalance investments and therefore in the rural labor drains. Even though the fourth development plans 1981-85 proposed certain integrative approaches to develop rural areas, particularly through orientating rural societies to produce for market, and for an enhanced strategy to raise productivity and income. Furthermore, the strategy was designed to provide a framework for equitable and even spread of infrastructural facilities and help to counter balance the strong trend towards rural-urban migration (Nigeria, 1984 : 29) The development plan documents have noted the difficulties associated with the transformation of rural Nigeria and have therefore shown that such expectations could not be realized largely due to the inflationary trend in the unstable economy coupled with embarrassing food imports and the rural-urban drain.

Efforts to stem out the tide of rural migration have not been successful due largely to the fact that strategies to improve rural productivity and income levels as well as employment opportunities could not be achieved. However, the provision of vital infrastructures and community services are abysmal whereas initiated action geared towards the responsible use of rural resources to preserve the social, physical and economic environment and to improve the quality of rural life has been dismal.

Another crucial issue within the confluence of rural-urban question is that which centres on the feeding and keeping food flowing into the cities as well as the need to provide spaces for farming in and around the cities. Irene Tinker for instance explains that most planning strategies favor the elite in the underdeveloped countries even though poor people in the cities are in the majority. Tinker further stressed that “income statistics reinforce the presumption that city dwellers are better off than those living in rural areas. But urban poverty is underscored when income is adjusted to reflect the high costs of food in cities” (Tinker, 1988:5).

Olivlo Argenti further maintains that the direct relationship between poverty and rapid urban growth has turned the feeding of the urban population into a difficult problem. As families in the cities spend more than three-quarters of their income on food, urban poverty grows astronomically. With the dwindled urban condition of life and purchasing power partly due to subsidy removal, devaluation of currency and the collapse of the urban supermarkets, the spread of uncontrollable marketing costs is currently giving way to further higher prices of food.

In the past, food importation was possible and was on the increase due to the dwindled agricultural production locally. Overtime and with the over-stretching of the resources such importation in response to growing food needs could no longer be continued. Thus, the economic stabilization policies, currency devaluation etc. have put restrictions to imports. Thus urban families, in the first place, have not been in position to obtain and consume the required food they need due largely to ban on food importation, currency valuation, weakened purchasing power, wage cuts, retrenchment in public service, reduced opportunities for employment and the withdrawal of all subsidies (Tinker,1988:19)

Migrants from countryside flood into the cities due partly to the attractions of the construction works and other means of transient employment. In both the cities and the countryside, food is a big problem, as it constitutes a big percentage of household expenditure. The sharp increase in food prices has given rise to grave implications for the economy and the persistent demand for wage reviews. The challenge here is that urban

agriculture has been ignored and how the urbanites can feed themselves is not given any serious thoughts. Furthermore, the need to improve the condition of the ruralities has received a perfunctory attention by the political economy. These, combined together, have brought about the soaring urban population with the corresponding rural depletion in recent years.

Conclusion

It has been shown and argued that there are serious crises in both the rural and urban habitats of the Nigerian society, which have continued to assume wider dimensions and implications. Part of the crises centres on the food production and food shortage, persistent poverty and socio-economic disparity which, more often than not, engineers the provocative rural-urban migration and the consequences thereof. However, the state intervention adds further impetus to the worsening situation as the agricultural pursuits, seen largely as rural, have nevertheless turned out to be more and more unbearable and unaffordable by the rural peasantry, thus making the society completely vulnerable to food deficit.

The challenges of urbanization inevitably challenge the rural question. Thus, as urban settlements and associated problems expand, rural conditions correspondingly worsen since urban areas pull out rural residents to migrate for the seeming better opportunities. With the state policies provoking the ruralities to uproot their places they no doubt raise the problems of security in both the rural settlements in all its manifestations. It must be stressed that any design and strategy to improve the urban condition must correspond with similar design and strategy to improve the rural areas in order to stamp out the prevalence of rural-urban migration. In other words, the tackling of the issue of sustainable development, infrastructural distributions are crucial in ameliorating the urban drift.

While rural infrastructures in Nigeria are abysmal and dismal, the disparities in the provision of such amenities have enabled rural residents to continue to move *en-masse* into the urban centres; a situation that has transformed and depleted rural agricultural productivity with soaring food prices and thus turning rural development policy and strategy into a colossal exercise in futility. To curtail further rural disruptions, basic needs must be provided and the communities directly involved participating in the affairs that affect them. Hence, the neglect of rural environment must be reversed in order to ensure a sustainable rural development as well as the overall national development.

With the rural society trapped within the confluence of the IMF-World Bank structural policies, the role of Community Development Associations in overturning the *status quo* should be pursued in order to lessen the problems associated with the population and housing pressure in the cities characterized with poor, squalor and inhabitable housing condition. The progress recorded in Nigeria with regard to providing housing settlements has rapidly degenerated as the houses already built by the government have been sold out to a few in disregard of the explosive homeless and under-privileged population. This policy has far-reaching consequences on land, shelter, water, transport and other socio-economic issues also. Thus shelter and settlement problems with food production and inadequate infrastructures have become elusive to most Nigerians. The poverty content in such circumstances has become the motive force and trend in rural depletion.

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