

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy for Rural Community Development in Nigeria: A Blue Print Formulation without Implementation.

By

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Abstract:

Rural communities in Nigeria are suffering from lack of access to better information for their development. Lack of access to adequate and right information at the right time to the rural communities undermines the efforts at improving the living conditions of rural dwellers. However, not only infrastructures and information technologies are absent in the rural communities but even health care facilities, educational facilities and library and information services are all a thing of the past in most of the rural areas in Nigeria. It is against this background that the Nigerian Government has formulated Information and Communication Technology policy that will bridge the digital and information gap that hitherto exist in the rural areas of Nigeria through National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). As stated in the IT policy, by 2005 Nigeria was to become "an IT capable country in Africa." We are now already in year 2013; can we say that Nigeria is a capable IT country? To put it plainly, Nigeria is not yet an average ICT country in Africa. The desire is there, the awareness has been created but the will power to budget sufficient funds to propel the ICT wheel of progress has been lacking. Up till today, eight years after the policy formulation, rural communities in Nigeria are yet to feel the impact of the implementation. Nothing has changed; neither a single infrastructure was deployed to rural communities nor the IT infrastructures. The information, digital and development gap that exists within rural and urban communities continues to be widening every single minutes of the day.

Introduction

Rural communities in Nigeria have invariably lagged behind in terms of any meaningful development; this constitutes to a greater extent the underdevelopment of a nation as a whole because rural communities form the nucleus of that nation (Aina, 2006). Lack of access to adequate and right information at the right time to the rural communities undermines the efforts at improving the living conditions of the rural people by both governments and non-governmental organizations. In addition to this, Lundeen, (1993) and Yates (1998) indicated that rural communities are backward because of the barriers to information access which include lack of funds, lack of appropriate hardware, lack of skills in using the information resources, insufficient infrastructure and insufficient time to spend on information task. For this reasons libraries have to use outreach programs as means of providing information services to a wider clientele beyond the physical walls of the information centres.

However, not only infrastructures and information technologies are absent in the rural communities but even health care facilities, educational facilities and library and information services are all a thing of the past in most of the rural areas in Nigeria. According to Okiy (2003), Nigeria is a predominantly rural country. She further, explain that precise up-to-date information on rural population size and growth patterns is not available; it is believed however, that more than 60 percent of Nigerians live in rural areas. These disproportionately large percentages of rural dwellers have many adverse implications for

Nigeria's national development. Because the rate of development of rural areas lags behind other sectors, they constitute a drag on national development. To stimulate national development, it is necessary to concentrate additional efforts on rural development in order to compensate for an overemphasis on industrialization and urban-based development.

It has been argued by scholars, researchers and policy makers on the question whether poor people living in rural areas in Nigeria need to be provided with information and communication technologies and even caution about the potential resistance that may arise in attempting to transform poor rural communities into cyber rural communities. They point out that the provision of clean water, roads, improved primary health care, and schools for teaching people to read and write as a means of improving their quality of life are far more important than providing people in rural communities with computer access to data networks. Nevertheless, the Nigerian Government has been making efforts to provide communication services to rural communities and enable them to be included in an increasingly more electronically connected world by establishing the IT policy in 2001. This policy to according them will serve as "the bedrock for national survival and development in a rapidly changing global environment, and challenges us to devise bold and courageous initiatives to address a host of vital socio-economic issues such as reliable infrastructure, skilled human resources, open government and other essential issues of capacity building" (Abuja Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, 2001).

According to Diso (2005) Nigeria faces a dual challenge, which has to be addressed in its ICT policy formulation. The first challenge is the sharp digital divide that exists between it and the rest of the world. The second challenge is the ideology behind ICT dependency (which implies knowledge dependency) on which globalisation subsists. Nigeria is a developing country situated in African continent, which so much bothered itself about information technology breakthrough, from the formulation of the IT policy in 2001 to date there is no single project to which the common citizens have appreciated with regards to the policy implementation. The environments through which such infrastructures will operate are in darkness. Diso (2005) explained that, the obvious joy and pride with which we often draw up a long list of what ICTs do or can do for us, seems to define our relationship – a relationship of dependency in which every facet of our (social, cultural, economic, educational, political, moral, intellectual and even psychological) life has been invested.

Hence, this paper seeks to answer the question how can the current ICT policies of the Nigerian Government aiming at the formation of ICT utilization in rural areas the improve quality of life in these areas? At present, rural communities in Nigeria are being excluded from the rest of the world in terms of communication, exchange of information, and usage of ICT-related services. This paper also seeks to explore existing challenges and provide suggestions for action that may enable the integration of isolated, disadvantaged, and poverty stricken rural communities into increasingly relying on ICT world. Finally, conclusions will be drawn from these arguments. It has become obvious that in the face of major challenges such as the total lack of even the most basic infrastructures in a community, namely roads, clinics and schools, that any ICT policy needs to be designed to play a role in addressing or helping to eliminate these critical problems.

The Panorama of the Current IT Policy in Nigeria

The Nigerian national policy for IT is a general IT policy that is all encompassing. The Policy takes the various sectors of the economy into account. As it is clearly stated in its vision statement: *“To make Nigeria an IT capable country in Africa and a key player in the information society by the year 2005, using IT as the engine for sustainable development and global competitiveness* (Abuja Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, 2001). The year 2005 has passed long ago, yet we could not see any meaningful contributions of IT

policy to general development, neither in the government agencies nor in urban or rural communities. Supporting this statement, Kari (2007) in his research found that the development and innovations of these remarkable technologies has not brought any remarkable changes in the living standards of rural communities of developing countries. Conditions prevailing in the rural areas of Nigeria are living examples of modern technology failure and unfortunate outlook of the technologically developed society of the entire world Kari (2007).

In addition, the preamble of the policy highlighted that Information Technology policy built on reliable human resources and infrastructure constitutes the fundamental tool and means of assessing, planning, managing development change and for achieving sustainable growth. It is for this reason that every progressive country has a national IT policy and an implementation strategy to respond to the emerging global reality and thus avert becoming a victim of the digital divide. A developing nation like Nigeria that aspires to participate effectively and become a key player in the emerging *Information Age* needs to have in place, a highly efficient Information Technology system driven by a vibrant national IT policy (Abuja Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, 2001)

Following the vision and mission statement coupled with the preamble of the IT policy of Nigeria there is no prospect of rural communities being brought into the mainstream of the IT infrastructure and networks as income levels are extremely low and economic activity are often at a standstill. Issues of affordability and privatisation have been priorities for the government to ensure proper empowerment. Convergence within ICT, where current technology allows multiple operations to take place in parallel (such as the ability of a single cable to carry both voice and data) further enhances the potential role to be played by ICT in service delivery to rural communities. In recognising the power of convergence, whereby a single multi-purpose community centre in a rural area can be positioned to serve citizens, the Nigerian government should recognise the importance of how essential it is to provide accessibility to infrastructure to all people. This will lead the government to strive to meet the demand to achieve universal service as urgently as possible. The delivery of universal service is largely dependent on human resource capacity within the industry.

Therefore, The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) was established to

ensure that ICT policies are developed and well implemented. Furthermore, the Agency was set up to ensure that proper information dissemination from the national government through the state and to the local authorities was carried out using the ICTs Kari (2007).

The underlying assumptions of the policy have proved to ignore the position of Nigeria within the political, social, educational, economic and technological development of the global system. Invariably this brings about questions which need to be answered by the policy makers as indicated by Diso (2005) that the assumption seems to ignore the current positioning of Nigeria within the global system. For instance, how is ICT capable in Nigeria? How does it survive as a nation vis-à-vis the (perceived or real) digital marginalisation? What competitive advantage or disadvantages does it have, relative to other nations – developed and developing? Cline and Powell (2004), mentioned that there is no doubt that ICTs, if effectively, constructively and critically deployed, can serve as the “bedrock for national development”.

The Nigerian IT policy formulation and implementation does not follow the logical and sequence statement offered by Cline and Powell 2004. In other words Diso (2005) stated that, many of our developmental problems could arguably, be explained in terms of uncritical attempts at acquisition of ICT capability, rather than in terms of lack of accessibility.

The Policy Content

The Nigerian IT policy document is structured into Sixteen (16) chapters, but this paper is concerned with chapter seven Kari (2007) only i.e. Urban and Rural Development. This chapter has the following:

Policy Statement

The government shall facilitate the development of the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and its utilization with other IT facilities for urban and rural area development.

Objectives

- (i) To develop digital master plans for our cities.
- (ii) To improve rural area development and management.
- (iii) To reduce the trend of rural to urban migration.
- (iv) To achieve environmentally clean cities and rural areas.
- (v) To generate IT related jobs for urban and rural youths.

- (vi) To introduce the benefits of e-governance to urban and rural communities.
- (vii) To make tools available to predict environmental problems in advance for necessary action.
- (viii) To promote the development of rural IT facilities.
- (ix) To promote the proper documentation of ownership of land and property in urban and rural areas and the transformation of dead property assets to capital.

Strategies

- (i) Creating environmental networks.
- (ii) Organising enlightenment campaigns about IT amongst city and rural area planners.
- (iii) Developing the Geographical Information system GIS technologies for use in urban and rural areas for planning and design.
- (iv) Re-training the present core designers and planners for relevance in the information era.
- (v) Establish rural internet resource centres with VSAT capability where such communities can have access to IT and the Internet and information on the following;
 - a. government programs,
 - b. local news and weather details,
 - c. land and related administrative records,
 - d. government license and related documentation application on-line,
 - e. local commodity prices and on-line transactions.
- (iii) Developing community telecentres for boosting the socioeconomic activities in the rural areas.
- (iv) Establishing IT facilities in rural areas through the use of Mobile Internet Unit, Community Telecentres, etc using satellite, wireless, HF-radio and cellular technologies (Abuja Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, 2001).

According to the policy statement, the government will set up and develop a national information infrastructure “backbone” as the gateway to the Global Information Infrastructure (GII) and create state and local area networks. This policy is to be implemented through the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). As stated in the IT policy, by 2005 Nigeria was to become “an IT capable country in Africa.” We are now already in year 2013; can we say that Nigeria is a capable IT country? To put it plainly, Nigeria is not yet an average ICT country in Africa. The desire is there, the awareness has been created but

the will power to budget sufficient funds to propel the ICT wheel of progress has been lacking (Womboh, and Abba, 2008).

Coming down to specific policy statement i.e. urban and rural development, the policy stated that, "The government shall facilitate the development of the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and its utilization with other IT facilities for urban and rural area development" [5]. This is expected to be achieved through its objectives and strategies by 2005 and up till today, eight years after the policy formulation, rural communities in Nigeria are yet to feel the impact of the implementation. Nothing has changed; neither a single infrastructure was deployed to rural communities nor the IT infrastructures. The information, digital and development gap that exists within rural and urban communities continues to be widening every single minute of the day.

According to Diso (2005) apparently by this merit, the policy formulators appeared too hasty to analyze where Nigeria came from, where it was and where it was going. In other words, they did not seem to contextualise Nigeria within its past and its contemporary realities so as to have fair projection of the future.

The objectives and strategies of the policy try to address several issues in different areas within a short time frame, objectives represent mere statements intended to achieve within the rural communities, which constitutes all the basic functions of the government. However, none of the objectives above was channelled to the rural communities of Nigeria, a situation by where the policy was formulated to serve both the rural and urban communities but most funds are expended on the comfort of urbanites to the detriment of rural infrastructure, which will not lead us into the mirage. In this situation, it is high time for the rural areas to receive utmost attention so that they too will begin to enjoy the benefits of living in the modern world, unlike the current situation where our rural folks dwell as if they are still in the early Dark Ages.

For this reason there is serious migration from rural areas to urban areas of Nigeria, because no one would like to remain in the rural areas if the current neglect of the countryside remains as it is. Many of rural dwellers who are currently squatting and suffering in the hovels of urban slums will gladly go back to their villages if there is a gradual implementation process of the policy and anything worth going back to other than poverty. It is these people who resort to violent crimes when they find no opportunity in the urban areas. They become the

scourge of urban life because they are excluded from meaningful economic participation, since they lack skills required to enable them do so.

Ironically, the concept of development today is based on the capacity of any nation to build itself with basic technological and information infrastructures since the world has graduated itself from technological revolution to information revolution where information has become the basic resources just like land, labour and capital, as such ICTs has become the power for development. Diso (2005) emphasised this statement by saying that, "ICTs are seen, especially in the developing nations as, transforming agents without which such nations cannot join the group of the developed nations. He further explained that, the development gaps between the two are more often (psychological) reduced to the ability gaps in ICT development. The developing nations are therefore, attracted by these magical powers of the ICTs, which can readily be used as the "catch-up" train".

Implementation Process

In essence, to make the policy formulation a reality, strategies were provided which are to follow as a framework for policy implementation, these strategies are systematically inclined with the objectives of the policy. After the approval of the ICT policy, the Federal Government of Nigeria liberalise the ICT sector by introducing Global System for Mobile communication which became a real spring in the step for the ICT utilisation for development. With the launch of *Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM)* in August 2001, the nation has come up from a teledensity. Today Nigeria has three GSM providers MTN, Airtel, Etislat and two national operators i.e. Globacom and NITEL (Mtel). Looking at the above scenario rural communities in Nigeria are still backward they are yet to feel the impact of the GSM operations, because of the biased nature of the implementation process which is one sided.

The history of ICT policies in Nigeria for a period of nine years did not address the needs of all people. Poverty and illiteracy in rural areas has skewed the manner in which ICT and telecommunication infrastructure was established in Nigeria. As a result the ICT and telecommunication network embodied the characteristics of marginalisation. For example, it was in a few rural areas and townships especially those by the main roads that the ICT and telecommunication infrastructure existed, and it was inadequately provided and maintained, while in urban areas the ICT and telecommunication

infrastructure was well established and supported. In the majority of the rural areas in Nigeria, there was a total absence of ICT and telecommunication networks.

Furthermore, under the previous political dispensation, during which the ICT policy was formulated showed no prospect for rural communities being brought into the mainstream of the conventional ICT and telecommunications network as income levels were extremely low and economic activity was often at a standstill. Issues of affordability and privatisation have been priorities for the government to ensure proper empowerment. During this period, the country experienced serious injury over the sale of first National Operator-Nigeria telecommunications (NITEL) Plc. The sale ran into some hitches and NITEL has been put under the care of some consultants who have the responsibility of reviving it. This has invariably crippled the ICT sector for development as rural areas become more hopeless for enjoying any affordable ICT and telecommunication infrastructure.

The second stage of the policy implementation looks at the convergence within ICT, where current technology allows multiple operations to take place in parallel (such as the ability of a single cable to carry both voice and data) further enhances the potential role to be played by ICT in service delivery to rural communities. In recognising the power of convergence, whereby a single multi-purpose community centre in a rural area can be positioned to serve citizens, the government has recognised the importance of how essential it is to provide accessibility to infrastructure to all people. This has led the Federal Government of Nigeria to strive to meet the demand to achieve universal service as urgently as possible. Therefore, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) was established to ensure that ICT policies are developed, monitored, evaluated, regulated and well implemented. Furthermore, the agency was given the power to ensure that proper communication and dissemination of information from the Federal Government through the state and to the local government authorities was carried out. Following the establishment of National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) in April 2001 to implement the Policy, several projects began to take place using the vision and mission of the IT policy.

The vision of the policy is:

“To make Nigeria an IT capable country in Africa and a key player in the

Information Society by the year 2005, using IT as the engine for sustainable development and global competitiveness”.

While The Mission Statement is:

“To “use IT” for Education, Creation of Wealth, Poverty Eradication, Job Creation and Global Competitiveness”.

The policy formulation has taken various sectors of the economy into account including rural communities as one of its major concern. Since then, NITDA has embarked on a number of projects aiming at stimulating the growth of ICT in the country. Among the projects of NITDA are as follows:

The Public Service Network (PSNet)

This project was established by NITDA to address the major problem of ICT infrastructure, which will serve as a pipe for ICT services. It consists of a Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) sited in the State Capital. This VSAT will provide Internet access for that central location and all other locations connected to this centre using Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) technology. The various sites around the country are then connected to each other through a Virtual Private Network (VPN). Nine states (9) have already been completed in the 1st Phase of the project [7]. This project only spreads its tentacles within the state capital without rooting into the Local government authorities and rural communities. It was through this project that the agency has established a coordinated program for the development of National Information Infrastructure (NII), State Information Infrastructure (SII) and Local Information Infrastructure (LII). This would have been a breakthrough if accomplished, at the end after sinking huge millions of money into the implementation process we end up not achieving the National Information Infrastructure (NII) nor the states and local government Information Infrastructures. As a result we still make a “U turn” to square zero especially in the rural areas. Another reason that hitches the implementation process of the policy was the total outage of power (electricity) which has crippled all sectors of development within the country. Power has become the basic ingredient for development which is no longer a luxury but rather a necessity, has become the major problem or worrisome to Nigerians.

Human Capacity Building

Human Capacity Building is another focus for NITDA initiatives. It is one of the prongs on which the IT Policy is based. The other “prongs” are

Infrastructural Capacity and Institutional Capacity Building. Towards realizing this goal, NITDA has forged a thriving partnership with public and private organizations in what has become a Public-Private Partnership (PPP). The Enterprise Technology Centre (ETC) is one such PPP that is worthy of note. The ETC is a partnership between NITDA and two private companies to provide IT training for Civil Servants. In Nigeria it is rather difficult for a private company to embark on the training of very top officials of the Civil Service. The ETC, which is located within the Federal Secretariat, has provided training for these top officials. The Head of the Civil Service of the Federation led all the Permanent Secretaries for two week training. This enlightenment has greatly aided us in our bid to integrate IT into the Public Service. With the training of the top officials, NITDA has provided an enabling environment for the private sector to train civil servants from the lower cadre. This top bottom top approach has been very successful [7].

The policy stated that, *“the government shall facilitate the development of the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and its utilization with other IT facilities for urban and rural area development.* Basing our arguments on human capacity building NITDA has ignored the rural areas or civil servants in the state and local government which constitutes the high percentage of public services in Nigeria; in essence no any infrastructure was provided to rural areas likewise the training. This shows that the NITDA implementation process is one sided focusing only the urban development while neglecting the rural community development, this has caused a serious implementation gap.

Mobile Internet Unit

The Mobile Internet Unit (MIU) is another important and most attractive initiative that is directly related to rural community development. This MIU is locally made bus that has been converted into a mobile training and cyber center. Its interior has 10 high-tech workstations all networked and connected to the Internet to facilitate access to several IT resources. It is equipped with printers, a photocopier and a number of multi-media facilities. Internet access is provided using Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) equipment with a 1.2m dish mounted on the roof of the bus. The unit is also equipped with a small generator to ensure regular power supply. The MIU provides everything you'll need in a high-tech cyber centre and it has the added advantage of being mobile. It takes the Internet to places that have no other means of access e.g. the rural areas.

It has also been deployed to various schools (primary and secondary) and the plan is to get all states and possibly Local Government Areas (LGAs) to have their own MIUs so as to facilitate the penetration of the Internet and ICT around the country (Kari, 2007)

Since the launch of this project in March 2003 the utilisation of facilities has been one sided or focused only on one direction to the neglect of the other. The facilities have been largely utilised in conferences and by secondary schools within the urban communities, in a nutshell it was only in Abuja and Lagos that the project was being noticed (i.e the present capital city and former capital city). The project according to Diso (2005) claimed to have trained a total of 3000 students and 150 staff of four secondary schools only in Abuja. This shows the total neglect of the other states in the federation and rural communities in particular.

Other Projects

A number of other projects have also been embarked upon. These include National ICT Inventory, Strategic Action Plan for the IT Policy and the e-government (e-accounting and e-statistics) in collaboration with the Italian government (Kari, 2007). All these projects have failed, even though they are only targeted to urban communities, no any report has shown the success of these initiatives in the country.

To this end it can be seen that policy implementation is one of the major problems confronting Nigerian development. According to Adamolekun (1983), policy implementation refers to the activities that are carried out in the light of established policies. It refers to the process of converting financial, material, technical and human inputs into outputs – goods and services (Egonmwan, 1984). Implementation problem occurs when the desired result on the target beneficiaries is not achieved. Such problem is not restricted to only the developing nations. Wherever and whenever the basic critical factors that are very crucial to implementing public policy are missing, whether in developing or developed nations, there is bound to be implementation problem.

Honadle, G. (1979) stated that, “Implementation is the nemesis of designers, it conjures up images of plans gone awry and of social carpenters and masons who fail to build to specifications and thereby distort the beautiful blue prints for progress which were handed to them. It provokes memories of “good” ideas that did not work and places the blame on the second (and second-class) member of the policy and administration team...” The above quotation shows the importance that is attached to

policy implementation and those that are responsible for implementing these policies. It also shows that no matter how beautiful the blueprint of a programme is, a defective implementation of it will make nonsense of the whole programme.

Unfortunately, the situation as described by Honadle above is what goes on in most developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. As stated by Egonmwan (1984), implementation in these countries often turns out to be the graveyard of policy where the intentions of the designer of policies are often undermined by a constellation of powerful forces of politics and administration in cooperation with people. Little attention is paid to the subject of policy implementation by policy decision makers while it is often taken for granted that once a policy is adopted by government it must be implemented and the desired goals achieved.

The above lapse has often resulted in poor policy implementation, which, in effect, gives rise to implementation gap. There is policy failure when there is a sizeable gap between a policy decision and its implementation. Such a gap is characterized, for example, by the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer in spite of stated policy goal to the contrary. Implementation gap thus manifests in the “widening of the distance between stated policy goals and the realisation of such planned goals” (Egonmwan, 1984). At this point, it will be worthwhile to highlight some of the causes of implementation gap in Nigeria.

Implementation Gap

There could be implementation gap as a result of many factors, which could arise from the policy itself, the policy maker, or the environment in which the policy has been made. Implementation gap can arise from the policy itself when such a policy emanates from government rather than from the target groups. By this, it means that planning is top-down. And, by implication, the target beneficiaries are not allowed to contribute to the formulation of the policies that affect their lives. This is usually what happens in Nigeria. Apart from the ego problem which sometimes culminates in lack of continuity as explained above, it should be noted that for policies to be successful they should involve target groups and they should allow for participatory system, whereby policy makers plan with the people rather than for the people in meeting their felt needs. Such participation will give the target groups a sense of belonging as well as get them committed to the successful implementation of the policy.

Challenges

The major challenges deterring the IT policy implementation in Nigeria are grouped into the following categories:

1. Researchers have confirmed that there is low level of education in rural areas of Nigeria which resulted in a lack of skills to perform major operational activities that could lead to the rural community development. Hence, most of the people living in rural areas are uneducated and unskilful; however, those with little skills have migrated to urban areas to seek for greener pasture. Furthermore, farming and other agricultural activities have contributed in making the youths not to receive education at all.
2. Total lack of general and basic infrastructure becomes the major challenges. Roads are almost absent especially the tar red roads. The electrical infrastructure installed and supported by Power Holding Company Nigeria (PHCN) is unreliable and unstable; in most of the times rural areas in Nigeria spend months without a flash of current. Furthermore, the present supply does not meet consumer demand, which has resulted in power cuts.
3. There is general lack of ICT infrastructure within Nigeria especially in the rural areas. In terms of backbone and bandwidth, this infrastructure is provided exclusively or has a deployment strategy that concentrates on urban areas as opposed to rural areas. Lack of financial support to maintain the existing infrastructure has become another major obstacle. Thus, the lack of ICT infrastructure negatively impacts on the entire infrastructure and poses a grave threat to the implementation of ICT services in rural areas.
4. There is a serious lack of environmental scrutinization that will ensure projects embarked satisfy user requirements and add value to citizens, an appropriate needs analysis is required. It has been a usual process by governments and authorities establishing projects which were not needed by the rural community members and thus there was resistance to such projects which invariably lead to no return on the investment.
5. Policy implementation gap. It has become an ethical issue to most governments of the developing countries Nigeria inclusive, policies are formulated but hardly implemented or the people that the policy is meant to serve are not part of the stakeholders. In the current situation not all stakeholders are involved in the development of such policies. Therefore, both the policies themselves and their implementation are inadequate. Most of

the projects failed because there is lack of clear deliverables, and so on.

6. Rural areas in Nigeria are characterised by challenges, principally the lack of financial resources. Funding is limited, if not non-existent, especially for ICT projects.
7. The major problem is the high rate of unemployment. Among the consequences of unemployment are poverty, depression, alcoholism, drug addiction and crime. In situations of poverty diseases arise and spread that further impact on the wellbeing of the community. Although not all poverty-stricken people turn to crime, certain people who have no food to feed their children sometimes resort to stealing.

Way Forward and Conclusion

Indeed, currently the people in rural areas of Nigeria are predominantly uneducated. Therefore, appropriate training programmes need to be designed to address the gaps that have been identified; these will adequately checkmate the differences between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, these rural people need to be educated with respect to cultural norms and value system and need to be taught how to become innovators and initiators of their own ideas as well as embark on projects that could help them to become self-dependent, educated and financially vibrant. The Nigerian educational process needs to be redesigned so that it meets up with external challenges. As technology advances, there is a need to match the Nigerian educational process to the current skills set to enable direct and proper usage of technology. There is the urgent need to establish a solid ICT infrastructure in rural areas of Nigeria to serve as a prerequisite to the provisioning of ICT-related services. It might be of relevance to establish an ICT forum for the development of rural areas in Nigeria.

In addition, there is the need to provide a policy framework that is necessary in giving route map for guiding the process of policy development life cycle to ensure effective service delivery. There is also need to build a flexible policy framework that can accommodate the dynamism of rural environments that are subject to external forces which might be political, economic and social or labour related in nature.

There is the need to align the policies formulated to the basic needs of the rural people or target group. At present, in most of the developing world policies are developed with either little or no consultation with affected people; invariably, these formulated policies do not take into account the

requirements of the target people. However, feeling the impact of such policies will ensure that policies are evaluated against the needs of the people. There is a greater need to re-evaluate, re-examine, retesting and reviewing of policies as a continuous basis so as to ascertain their validity and relevance as well as introduce pertinent amendments for implementation.

It is however, recommended that emphasis has to be made on taking the affected people into concern in the policy formulation to ensure the success of any ICT-related project that is to be implemented. The people targeted by any policy within a rural setting have to be identified from the scratch to serve as the key beneficiaries and as essential to the policy implementation and to know in advance whether the aforesaid policy will address their requirements and be able to manage the expectations of those affected and communicate accordingly. It is however, worthy of mention to acknowledge that successful policies are underpinned by an effective communications strategy, the strategy identifies the content, the recipients, the frequency to be communicated as well as the communication channels.

Finally, lack of leadership in the implementation process and for integrating multiple policy initiatives has become a serious ailment in the success of any policy formulated particularly in Nigeria. As such purposeful leadership is needed to glue the process together and ensure that the environment is analysed in order to understand the existing challenges and plan for effective implementation action. Furthermore culture of non-compliance with new policies by Nigerians is another major hindering factor that needs to be addressed.

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