

A CRITIQUE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS IN IWARO OKA-AKOKO, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA.

Fagbohunka, Adejomo

Geography and Planning Sciences Department,
PMB 001, Adekunle Ajasin University,
Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria.
E-Mail : adejompofagbohunka@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Rural development implies both economic betterment of people as well as greater social transformation. Unfortunately, most of the rural area is yet to be modernized and transitioned from its traditional isolation to integrate with the national economy. This paper therefore, underscores the problems of rural development in Iwaro Oka-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The first stage in the collection of primary data involves reconnaissance survey of the study area, while the second stage necessitated the administration of questionnaire. Seven zones were identified and twenty questionnaires were administered in each of the zones, making a total of one hundred and forty. Issues such as the infrastructural facilities, literacy level, component of economic activities as well as the people's attitude to modernization and technological innovation were sought in the questionnaire. The study however, adopts descriptive method of data analysis.

The paper has revealed a grossly inadequate rural transportation. Also, infrastructure which helps to determine the success of manufacturing and agricultural activities is not only inadequate but also substandard. Furthermore, the research has shown that the health facility is nothing to write home about and needs an urgent attention, overhauling and tremendous amelioration. There was mass illiteracy which needs a significant improvement. The study area is basically an agrarian community with low level of industrialization. Moreover the paper reveals the lukewarmness of attitude in accepting modernization and technological innovation, this has been the bane and one of the major clog in the wheel of development. Agricultural problems include; price fluctuation, storage facilities, pests and diseases which attack the crops and animals, the use of crude implements, and an infinitesimal contribution of government towards rural development. This connotes that the rural area has suffered unwarranted alienation, deprivation and neglect in both past and present government development programmes. Rural development cannot be overemphasized in the positive transformation of a regional economy, especially during this period of a global economic recession; as it will significantly alleviate unemployment as well as rural urban migration problems. It will further act as a catalyst to industrial development, which is a panacea to socio-economic development. In the light of this, the paper concluded that government should exhibit more commitment and sincerity towards rural development by providing adequate infrastructural facilities, giving of loans and subsidy to farmers in order to boost agricultural productions and serve as an encouragement to interested farmers. People of the grass root should also be involved with the developmental programmes as this will provide the rural people with better prospects of economic development.

Key Words: Agriculture, Economic development, Integrated development approach, Iwaro Oka, Rural development,

Introduction

A big proportion of the world population lives in the rural area. According to Pacione, (1984) about 66% of the world population live in villages, hamlets and farmsteads. There has been no general consensus about the definition of the term 'rural'. For instance, Volgye, (1980) on the basis of demographic and economic criteria defined a rural settlement as an area of relatively low population density, predominance of labour-intensive, usually agricultural occupations, traditional attitudes and life style, and an area where a landscape or habitat commonly recognised by its rural elements as countryside.

The concept of rural development (RD) as an alternative strategy to overall development has become a world-wide currency and fashion in both the advanced and backward countries. Combining all the essential elements of development, rural development can be described as the integrated approach to food production as well as physical, social and institutional infrastructural provisions with an ultimate goal of bringing about both quantitative and qualitative changes, which result in improved living standard of the rural population. It should however be noted that rural development models and programmes pursued by several countries have inevitably produced various results. Some have been successful while many others including Nigeria have woefully failed. The failures in these countries are not only because there is "no agreed criteria to determine development objectives (and) assess results or the practical examples have not lived up to their theoretical or conceptual vision or offered what could be regarded as the best possible combination of political and economic objectives of development" but of the political will of the leadership, the nature of the economy and the class struggles therein. Most Nigerians dwell in rural areas, where they experience on a daily basis, the stark realities of underdevelopment. Rural backwardness in all its manifestations includes; Poor transportation and healthcare delivery, declining food production, lack of industrialisation, rural-urban migration, inadequate infrastructural facilities and disorderly spatial development.

Many scholars have shown concern about the problems of the Nigerian rural sector and made recommendations to alleviate these problems; such as modernisation of agriculture, integrated development and agricultural extension services. The fact that the rural area is an important sector which people depend mostly for food, shelter and clothing is not contestable Fagbohunka, (2012) despite these tremendous advantages, the rural area has suffered isolation, neglect and deprivation. This paper, therefore underscores the problems militating against rural development, with the aim of suggesting the way forward in order to alleviate these problems.

Conceptual Issues and Relevant Literature

Hunter (1964) was among the earliest to use the expression rural development, which he considered as the "starting point of development" characterised by subsistence. Ekpo and Olaniyi (1995) defined rural development as a process through which rural poverty is alleviated by sustained increases in the productivity and incomes of low rural dwellers and households. This definition is defective as it dwelt majorly on the economic growth, which is just an aspect of development. Taking into cognizance, the economic growth and social upliftment as aspect of development, Ijere (1990) regarded rural development, as the process of increasing the per capita income and quality of life of the rural dweller to enable him become prime mover of his own destiny. Obinne and Ogidefa (2010) perceived rural development to involve creating and widening opportunities for (rural) individuals to realise full potential through education and share in decision action which affect their lives. Ijere (1990) identified various rural development approaches, among which includes; the big push policy, selective approach, adaptive approach, the top-down and bottom-up approaches.

In essence, three basic strategies of rural development have been suggested and tried in many countries and in between them there exist different mixtures. These strategies, according to Griffin (2000) are; (a) technocratic, (b) reformist and radical. However, the integrated approach to rural development suggests some multi-sectoral efforts by the state which involve the provision of infrastructural facilities like roads, dams, schools, electricity etc., introduction of new techniques, establishment of banks and other service agencies as well as organising and mobilizing people for productive activities.

STUDY AREA AND METHODS

Iwaro Oka is located in South-West Local Government Area of Akoko,Ondo state. It lies on 7⁰ 28' North and 5⁰ 44' East of the equator. The area is characterised by rough topography with various heights of highlands and rocks. Since Iwaro Oka is located in the tropical region, there is adequate precipitation. The soil of the study area is ferruginous type. Tropical hardwood such as mahogany, Iroko, Afara among others are found in the area, and the inhabitants engage predominantly in primary activities such as farming and exploitation of the forest resources. Precisely, a larger percentage of the population engage in farming as their major occupation, while few engage in other activities like trading, teaching and artisans. The recent population figure in Iwaro Oka is 95,202 according to the national population census of 2006.

The paper adopts the primary and secondary methods of data collection. The first stage in the collection of primary data involves the reconnaissance survey of the study area. The second stage is the administration of questionnaire. Iwaro Oka was divided into seven zones, and twenty questionnaires administered in each of the zone, making a total of one hundred and forty. The questionnaire sought information on issues such as the problems of the rural development, transportation and infrastructural facilities as well as government contribution to rural development; the entire questionnaires were retrieved for analysis. Secondary data were sourced from textbooks, journals and the internet, while Population figure were derived from national population census. The data collected were analysed descriptively.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Sex	Number of respondent	Percentage %
Male	98	70
Female	42	30
Age (in years)		
<20	03	2
21-30	19	14
31-40	31	22
41-50	46	33
51-60	25	18
60+	16	11
Education Status		
No formal education	32	22
Primary education	39	27
Secondary education	45	32
Tertiary education	18	12
Others	10	07
Occupation		
Farming	75	54
Civil servant	12	09
Trading	20	14
Artisan	16	11
Others	17	12

Field Survey, 2013.

Table 1 reveals the demographic characteristics of the respondents, out of one hundred and forty (hundred Per cent), 98(70%) were males, while 42(30%) were females. The age characteristics shows that 46(33%) respondents were between 41 and 50 years, 31(22%) were between 31 and 40 years, while 3(2%) are less than 20 years. Apparently from table 1 45(32%) possess secondary education, 39(27%) have primary education, 32(22%) have no formal education, while 10(07%) opined others. Table 1 further reveals that 75(54%) respondents were farmers, 20(14%) were traders, while 12(09%) were civil servants. Another 16(11%) were artisans, whereas 17(12%) opined others.

Table 2 Status of Rural Transportation

Transportation status	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Adequate	10	07
Inadequate	65	46
Grossly inadequate	50	36
Nil	15	11
TOTAL	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

Table 2 depicts the status of rural transportation, out of 140(100%) respondents, 10(7%) opined rural transportation adequacy, 65(46%) agreed its inadequacy. Also, 50(36%) believed that rural transportation is grossly inadequate, while 15(11%) opined nil. This clearly connotes that rural transportation is nothing to write home about; hence it is in a terrible state of urgent attention and disrepair.

Table 3 Rural Infrastructure

Infrastructural status	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Very high standard	01	0.7
High standard	03	2.3
Average standard	42	30
Substandard	94	67
Nil	-	-
Total	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

Table 3 reveals the rural infrastructural standard. Out of 140(100%) respondents, 94(67%) believed that the rural infrastructure is substandard, 42(30%) agreed that it is averagely standard, only 1(0.7%) opined a very high standard. This further points out that rural infrastructure needs to be improved significantly, because an infrastructural facility is a major prerequisite to socio-economic development.

Table 4 Health Facilities in Iwaro Oka

Health facilities	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Highly adequate and modern	-	-
Adequate	25	18
Inadequate	105	75
Nil	10	7
TOTAL	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

There is a very strong relationship between the health of a man and his productivity. As shown in table 4, 105(75%) respondents agreed on inadequate health facilities, whereas 25(18%) opined adequate. None of the respondents agreed on highly adequate facilities. Apparently, the health facilities need to be ameliorated.

Table 5 Literacy Level

Literacy level	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Very high	2	1
High	25	18
Average	82	59
Low	31	22
TOTAL	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

Table 5 reveals the literacy level in the study area, 82(59%) respondents agreed on an average literacy level, whereas 2(1%) believed the literacy level is very high. Another 25(18%) opined high, while 31(22%) believed that the literacy level is low. Obviously, the literacy level in the study area needs significant improvement.

Table 6 The Dominant Component of Economic Activities

Economic activities	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Primary	77	55
Secondary	26	19
Tertiary	12	9
Quaternary	25	17
TOTAL	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

The dominant component of economic activities in the study area as revealed in table 6 is the primary activity, as attested to by 77(55%) respondents. Also, secondary activities ranked second 26(19%), whereas 12(9%) opined tertiary activities, while 25(17%) believed that quaternary activities is the dominant. It is obvious that the leading sector of the economy is the primary activities.

Table 7 Attitudes to Modernization and Technological Innovation

Attitudes	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Highly Primitive	29	21
Primitive	47	34
Very modern	44	31
Modern	20	14
TOTAL	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

Table 7 shows the attitudes to modernization and technological innovation. Out of 140(100%) respondents, 47(34%) opined primitive attitude, whereas 44(31%) agreed very modern. Another 29(21%) believed their attitudes were highly primitive, while 20(14%) agreed it is modern. It is apparent that most of the respondents affirmed the primitiveness of the inhabitants to modernization and technological innovation.

Table 8 Industrialization in Iwaro Oka

Industrialization	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Highly	-	-
Moderately	-	-
Low	96	69
Nil	44	31
TOTAL	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

Table 8, affirm low level of industrialization as asserted by 96(69%) respondents, whereas 44(31%) believed that industrialization is Nil. Industrialization is a potent instrument of development. An area lacking industrialization will undoubtedly experience lack, stagnation and retardation. Therefore, industrialization in the study area needs significant over hauling.

Table 9 Problems Militating against Agricultural Development

Agricultural problems	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Price fluctuation	59	42
Illiteracy	20	14
Pests and diseases	36	26
Inadequate capital	15	11
Storage facilities	10	7
TOTAL	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

Table 9 reveals the problems militating against agricultural development, ranges from price fluctuation as opined by 59(42%) respondents, illiteracy problem as agreed by 20(14%) respondents, pests and diseases 36(26%) to inadequate capital 15(11%) and problems of storage facilities as believed by 10(7%) respondents. Apparently the dominant agricultural problem is price fluctuation.

Table 10 Government Contributions to Rural Development

Government contribution	Number of respondents	Percentage %
Satisfactory	-	-
Fairly satisfactory	10	7
Averagely satisfactory	35	25
Not satisfactory	90	64
Nil	05	4
TOTAL	140	100

Field Survey, 2013.

Out of 140(100%) respondents, 90(64%) believed that government contribution to rural development is not satisfactory, 35(25%) opined average satisfaction. Another 10(7%) agreed fairly satisfactory, whereas 5(4%) believed that government effort is Nil. It is therefore; very vivid that government has not been alive to rural transformation and development.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The population of the developing countries abound in the rural areas. For instance, in Nigeria 80% of the people live in the rural areas. These nations are characterised by low per capita income and there is marked rural urban dichotomy of income. To achieve a balanced national development there is the need for improvement of the rural areas. Considering the relevance of the rural areas in national development, this paper investigates the problems of rural development in Iwaro Oka, Akoko, Ondo State.

The paper reveals a sordid state of rural transportation, hence its terrible state of disrepair. Rural transportation has a serious consequence on rural economy, because it is a major determinant of the prices agricultural goods. The paper further reveals inadequate and substandard rural infrastructure. An investment in water, sanitation, energy and housing is germane to rural development as it improves lives and help to reduce poverty. The health facilities needs significant overhauling and upgrading, also, there is low literacy level, and this probably why the people were primitive in accepting modernization and technological innovation. Primary activities are the dominant activity component of the economy, this further attests to the agrarian nature of the community. Industrialization is grossly underdeveloped and some of the problems militating against agricultural development includes; price fluctuation, inadequate capital, illiteracy, storage facilities as well as pests and diseases. It was vivid from the research that the rural area has suffered deprivation, isolation and unwanton neglect as a result of government insignificant contribution towards its development.

The present rural development situation poses great problems to the nation's socio-economic transformation. Government should show the necessary leadership by matching words with action through evolving workable rural development approaches, proper coordination, funding and technical assistance. The nation's agricultural experts should be encouraged to make useful contribution to agricultural development. This paper however, recommends an integrated rural development approach, which is multi-sectoral efforts to be championed by the government which involved the provision of infrastructural facilities like roads, dams, schools, electricity among others, introduction of new techniques, establishment of banks and other service agencies as well as organizing and mobilizing people for productive activities. It is imperative to note that accelerated and meaningful development can be achieved only if people of the grass root are involved as this will provide the rural people with better prospects for economic development.

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