

Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs): An Imperative Approach to Sustainable Rural Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: Rural development involves planned change of the rural man and his socio-economic environment from a less desirable to a more desirable state. That is, the process by which the well-being of the people is significantly uplifted where there is a general enhancement in the quality of life of majority of rural people. This involves the active participation of the rural communities for whom the rural development programme is designed. Meanwhile, if the programme is properly conceived and effectively implemented, it will bridge the wide gap of inequalities between urban and rural areas. In Nigeria, several attempts were made to effect rural development. Among the first efforts were the establishment of Community Boards of 1954, the farm settlement scheme of the then Western Nigeria in 1959 and the third National Development Plan (1975-80). Others include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of 1976, River Basin Development Authorities of 1977, Land Use Decree of 1978, Green Revolution of 1980 among others. However, attempts have been made in this study to examine some of the rural development strategies being employed in Nigeria. The review shows that no single strategy can by itself, provide the solutions to the rural under development. Invariably, a holistic approach such as integrated rural development as introduced by Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) is seen as one of the approaches to rural problems. Integrated rural development is a multi purpose approach or inter-disciplinary solutions to rural development, unlike single purpose approach such as agricultural extension or monodisciplinary agricultural production. This means all programmes such as agricultural education and training, health services, rural electrification, roads and cooperatives must not be conceived in isolation. This study tries to evaluate the far reaching effect of Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs). Also, it tries to determine its effectiveness or otherwise in the provision of basic needs to rural areas for sustainable development. Meanwhile, it has been suggested that any approach to rural development in Nigeria that focuses attention on the improvement of the standard of living of rural people should be given all necessary supports it deserves.

Key words: Integrated rural development, agricultural development project, imperative approach, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The idea of rural development is a process by which a reasonable change of tolerable levels of living can be brought within the grasp of ordinary man and woman (Adewale, 1990). This means an improvement in the living standard of rural population. Mabogunje (1980) stated that rural development is concerned with the improvement of the standard of living of the low income population living in rural areas on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the socio-economic spatial structures of their productive activities. It is observed that the adoption of rural development programme will raise the income of the rural people who engaged predominantly in agriculture and other non-farm activities such as agro-based industries (Idachaba, 1983). This will help in the

area of equitable distribution of wealth and personal income between the urban dwellers and rural segments of the society.

It is observed that over 70% of the Nigerian population lived in the rural areas and well over 95% of the people living in the urban centres have rural inhabitants. The scenario of rural life in developing countries, Nigeria as an example, is typical: Low per capita income low level of literacy, high infant mortality and poor housing and other infrastructural facilities. The idea of meeting these ever-growing rural poverty problems brought about the concept of integrated Rural Development. In order to improve the well being of rural settlers, an integrated rural development must work towards achieving the following objectives: Gainful employment for the rural poor to enable them improve

their level of consumption patterns especially in food and nutrition; equal access to social services and social security like the people in urban centres, increased mobilization and motivation of the rural communities to achieve wider participation in decision-making relevant to their welfare and renewable and non-renewable resources and the avoidance of environmental degradation.

Several attempts have been made in Nigeria to effect rural development. Such efforts include the establishment of farm settlements in the Western and Eastern Regions of Nigeria. In 1964, the Mid-Western Region launched school leavers' farms (similar to farm institutes set up in then Northern States) which were designed to be less capital intensive than farm settlement. This shows that during post World War II till the end of the Second National Development Plan in 1975 rural development efforts were concentrated mainly on increasing agricultural output on the existing programmes such as National Accelerated Food Production Programme 1973. Other significant effort towards planning rural development was in the 3rd National Development Plan (1975-80). The policy in this 3rd plan, was to concentrate on raising productivity in agriculture, provide basic amenities such as water, medical services, schools and electricity. Great attention was paid to the relative development of the rural areas and the national attention for Integrated Rural Development was first mentioned.

What distinguished past approaches from integrated rural development is that these have often been pursued independently of one another and their inter-relationship have not been grasped. Also, political bottleneck, high capital intensive nature of the schemes, excessive centralization of planning and control and lack of rural settlers' participation in decision making, lack of suitable co-ordinating inter-ministerial institution for implementation render the rural developments schemes unsuitable as effective problem solving strategies (Ogundele, 2002).

The failure of the past and emphasis placed in rural development by present day government led to greater attention being paid to integrated rural development programmes. It is observed that integrated Rural Development encompasses much more than an increase in agricultural production and productivity. It includes small town development, extension of health services, expansion of local trade and commerce, organization of cooperatives, the provision of credits, improvement on housing and water supply, sanitation, roads and communication are all within the scope. Hence it is therefore regarded as a concept for planning and

implementation, providing framework for mobilization of human and material resources to achieve social and economic integration.

This study focuses attention on the actual participation by the government in the establishment of rural projects which were owned or partly owned by the government and the case study is the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) with special reference to Ekiti Agricultural Development Projects. In 1972, the then Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources mounted country-wide Agricultural projects identification mission with the assistance of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (BRD) (Farmers' Friends, 1986). The report of the mission identified three pilots Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) in the Northern part of Nigeria and 4 small holder-oil palm, cocoa, Rubber and irrigated rice projects in the South. After detailed feasibility studies and appraisals, the pilot ADPs were started in Funtua, Gusua and Gombe in the Northern part of the Country. The success of these pilot projects led to the clamour by other states for similar project and these 6 enclave Agricultural Development Projects evolved in 1978-1982 of which Ekiti-Akoko Agricultural Development Project (which was later changed to Ekiti State Agricultural Development Project was one of them.

The Ekiti State Agricultural Development Project is a state-wide project within the Multi-state Agricultural Development (Phase III) (MSADP III). The project is a World Bank assisted project and is being funded by the Federal Government, old Ondo State Government and the World Bank. This State project performed the following functions:

- To increase the availability of locally produced food in order to reduce food shortage thereby steaming down the present sky-rocketing prices of food stuffs.
- To improve the quality of rural life in the state and to reduce the rate of rural-urban migration.
- To enhance the productivity of the rural population and enhance the income and standards of living of the people.
- To provide and strengthen social and farm services such as farm services centres, rural roads, rural water supply and farm inputs.
- Development of livestock, fisheries and animal health services.

It is observed that integrated rural development encompasses similar objectives to those mentioned above and this study attempts to evaluate the impacts of ADPs in integrated rural development scheme.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to clearly evaluation the impact of Ekiti ADPs in rural Development, pre-coded questionnaire and field observations were adopted from five selected Local Government areas in Ekiti State. These are Ekiti North, Oye, Irepodun/Ifelodun, Ado and Ijero. The questionnaire was designed and distributed to the village farmers through the help of ADPs Village Executive Enumerators. A substantial response rate of 91.1% (155 out 170 questionnaires) was obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings in this study shall be presented under the following sub-headings: Crop production; cooperative societies and provision of rural infrastructures.

Crop production: One of the strategies for integrated rural development is Large Scale Agricultural scheme. This is always considered to be the most viable for rapid agricultural development. This involves the provision of improved varieties of seeds, animal breeds, fertilizers, credit facilities, storage and transport facilities for efficient agricultural production.

One of the basic means introduced by Ekiti ADPs in increasing agricultural production is through the use of agricultural extension services and field demonstrations based on improved planting materials and proper application of fertilizer for important crops. The use of Small Plot Adoption Techniques (SPAT) on various technological messages such as optimum plant population on maize and cassava as well as the use of improved varieties in arable crops is to improve crop production. it was observed that a total of 2,078 ha of demonstrated plots were introduced between 1982 and 1986 on varieties of crops such as Yam, Rice, Cassava, Soyabeans etc. However, the impact of demonstrations to farmers has shown a tremendous positive effect on crop production in the project area, this can be shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Farmer’s response to crop population

Crop grown	No. of farmers	Average hectares of land per farmer	Total hectares
Yam	23	3	69
Cassava	40	10	400
Maize	33	15	495
Maize and yam	37	8	296
Rice	40	16	640
Soyabeans	15	4	60
Cowpeas	8	3	24
Maize and cassava	43	9	387
			2371

Source: Fieldwork, 2005

The increased numbers of hectares on various crops indicated a greater improvement in the cultivation of crops compared with the past before the inception of ADPs.

It was gathered that the commercial division of the ADP is responsible for the distribution of inputs to farmers at reasonable prices. Fertilizers donated the inputs given to farmers and the effect has been very significant.

Credit and cooperative societies: It is observed that community development and cooperative schemes are included in the strategies for rural development by ADPs. Ekiti ADPs have been able to encourage this in its programme. It was discovered that credit given to farmers through their cooperatives societies has influenced some other rural farmers to form more cooperatives in the states. This will eventually encourage savings by culturing in the peasants the spirit of frugality thus reducing the acute shortage of rural credits in the rural areas which has been identified as one of the serious problems in rural development in Nigeria (Teriba, 1973).

It has been observed from investigation that between 1983-1990) a total number of 117 cooperative groups were made within the project area and they have been able to acquire loans from the project. Besides, contributions were made among members to help each other in purchasing farm inputs.

Rural infrastructures: Provision of rural infrastructures means provision of certain facilities such as feeder roads pipe born water electricity and health services for rural dwellers. It has been observed that agricultural Development alone however intensified, cannot produce balanced rural development of adequate capacity and able to up-grade rural life. This has to be supported by other rural facilities as stated above.

On the basis of this, the ADPs have included the rural infrastructure to its agricultural activities. However, it has been discovered that the project concentrated on rural water supply scheme and construction and rehabilitation of roads. From information gathered during field investigation, it was discovered that much has not been done in provision of water to rural areas. From the record available from the headquarters show that a total of 150 wells and 2 boreholes were sunk up to 2004. This is about 12.5% of their target as at that period.

Various categories of roads were however, constructed and some rehabilitated to link some villages and towns as well as linking some farmers’ farms. Meanwhile, the extents of roads constructed and rehabilitated up to 1993-1996 are shown Table 2.

These roads have successfully connected some villages and farms together for easy evacuation of farm

Table 2: Road construction and rehabilitation (1993-1995)

Year	Road constructed (in km)	Roads maintained (in km)
1993	62.20	6
1994	105.88	18
1995	52.27	69
1996	54.60	89
	258.04	186

Source: Project Completion Report of the ADPs (2005)

products to nearest market place and have equally provided a connecting links between the few rural areas. The Significance of the findings.

The analysis shows a significant improvement to the life of rural dwellers in the state. During the period of study, the project has assisted a lot in the areas of increasing food production, provision of pipe borne water and rural electrification. Farmers were able to form cooperative societies for loan procurement and financial assistance. Roads were constructed and existing ones maintained to link the rural areas. The achievements of the ADP made it clear that rural development involves more than agricultural productivities. It includes equitable distribution of income, widespread improvements on health, accessibility to good network of roads and creation of incentives and opportunities for saving and investment.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS

The failure of earlier development efforts to ameliorate the condition of rural dwellers has led to the increasing attention paid to the issue of rural development by the ADPs. The scheme has successfully carried out its major functions in the areas of provisions of rural infrastructure, increased locally produced food and improves the quality of life of rural dwellers. Meanwhile, further suggestions have been made in this research in the areas of sustainable rural development. These include:

- More priorities should be given to rural areas in terms of provision of basic amenities such as roads, rural electrifications, health services etc. For example, the Revolution of 1959 in Cuba brought positive changes to the lives of peasant farmers in the area. After the revolution, government had been making efforts to provide basic amenities to about 85% of the rural population. The Cuba Rural Development Approach was rural centred packaged. All aspects of the rural needs; roads, education, employment and electricity were considered as a whole. This indicator made the World Health Organisation rated Cuba best in Latin America (Times International, 1988). This approach could be applied to the Nigerian policy of rural development to transform the rural life to better.

- The regrouping strategies adopted in Tanzania by bringing scattered communities together and provide them with common facilities is a welcome idea. The villagisation policy adopted by President Julius Nyerere in 1962 paved way for the Arusha Declaration of 1967 when the country chose to live a communal/socialist life based on the principle of Ujama. This philosophy was aimed at equity, cooperatives and non-exploitation of the communities. This principle could be emulated but efforts should be made at bringing together people of the same idea, languages and cultural traits.
- More priorities should be given to Poverty Alleviation Programme currently practiced in Nigeria. Money should be made available to deserved communities for the provision of electricity, pipe borne water, health facilities etc. For example in Indonesia, under the Green Revolution Programme, the World Bank and other International Agencies made fund available for the provision of large scale farm production and other infrastructural facilities such as schools, health services etc. The rural development policy was centred on the intensification of agricultural production. This became necessary because David and Chaudhri (1983) argued that the rural population of Indonesia in 1980 was estimated to be 81% of the total populace. This policy can also be adopted in Nigeria since the rural development in Indonesia was not a failure as there were significant improvements in the provision of rural based infrastructure. The only thing is that the provision of such funds should be monitored to make sure that they are judiciously spent.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it is indicative that the ADPs which adopted an integrated approach to rural development have shown a positive effect to a greater extent. During the period under review, this success rests mainly on effective management and proper involvement of the rural dwellers in their activities. The Ekiti Agricultural Development Project, like any other ADPs in the country have set up to improve the quality of rural life, increase crop production through the use of adoption model, formed credits and cooperative societies and provision of essential infrastructures in rural areas.

It is observed that no single strategy can, by itself, provide the solutions to rural development. Hence, a

holistic approach such as integrated rural development adopted by ADPs and various suggestions indicated in this research that focus attention on the improvement of the standard of living of the rural masses should be given all necessary supports.

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