

Integrated Development through Infrastructure and Socio Economic Wellbeing of Rural Dwellers in Nigeria

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Abstract

Like most developing countries, the Nigerian rural sector is faced with the challenges of urbanisation. In addition, poverty is most prevalent and infrastructure is either inadequate or unavailable. This leaves the rural dwellers with the option to migrate to urban areas with the hope of employment and improved living conditions. This has created multiple effects. This study examines the integrated development model and its impact on the provisions of infrastructure in Nigeria. It is anchored on the integrated rural development model. The study is empirical and as such employs the descriptive research design. The Southern and Central Senatorial Districts of Cross River State constitute the area of data were primary data were obtained with the aid of a questionnaire. One null hypothesis was stated and tested using person product moment correlation statistical technique. The result obtained shows that the provision of infrastructure in rural areas is significant in boosting economic activities, which in turn enhances the well-being of rural dwellers. The study concludes by advocating for rural participation in the planning and implementation of development strategies.

Keywords: *Integrated development, Infrastructure, Socio economic wellbeing, Rural dwellers*

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Background to the Study

It was Delmon (2008) who explained that “rural poverty is often a product of poor infrastructure that hinders development and mobility. Rural areas tend to lack sufficient roads that would increase access to agricultural inputs and markets”. Without basic infrastructure, the rural poor are cut off from technological development, emerging markets and other economic opportunities which exist in their urban counterparts. Easterly (2002) says “poor infrastructure hinders communication, resulting in social isolation among the rural poor, many of whom have limited access to media, postal services and means of interacting with the outside world”. This hinders integration with urban society and established markets which could result in the greater development and economic opportunities and security (Willoughby, 2004).

The viability of the agricultural sector which forms a larger part of the rural economy is affected by poor access to infrastructure. Moreover, Gramlich (1996) maintained that “poor or non-existent irrigation systems threaten agricultural yields because of uncertainty in the supply of water for crop production”. Most poor rural areas lack irrigation systems to expand agricultural production and this narrows their economic opportunities, productive capacity, income and saving capacity (Anam, 2015).

Researchers by the World Bank (2006) & (2008) reveals that social and economic infrastructure can potentially play three roles in boosting the rural economy: “as an engine of economic recovery and improved service provision as part of a process of strengthening institutions, and in stabilisation and peace-building”. Fredericks (2012) noted that “infrastructure development can result in employment generation for the most vulnerable and/or poor groups”. He further reiterated that access roads in rural communities “can produce short-term employment opportunities in fragile and conflict affected regions particularly applying to programmes where rural road development is carried out through community-driven development or with special emphasis on inclusion through participatory methods” (Fredericks, 2012).

There is extant literature to explain that rural road construction reduced isolation for minority groups and provided more opportunities for inclusion in wider economic activity (Vermeire, & Gellynck, X. & De Steur, Hans & Viaene, J. 2008; Margarian, 2010; Dobay, 2011 and Anam, 2015). However, “this evidence did not relate directly to reducing conflict or improving security. Poverty and isolation literature defines this as access to inputs and output markets, access to education and health services, and access to labour opportunities through which road access contributes to reduced poverty” (Vermeire, et al, 2010).

Emerging qualitative and empirical evidence explains that rural infrastructure has a positive impact on economic development in rural areas. For instance, road roads in general lead to improved access to both users and suppliers of economic resources (Vermeire, et al, 2010). He noted further that, “this occurs due to a reduction in commuting time, as well transport costs but these benefits tend to accrue disproportionately to the influential and well-educated. Rural communities tend to ascribe great importance to road development and perceive it to improve access to markets, health and education facilities” (Vermeire, et al, 2010). The study examines the need to integrate the rural populace in the bid to provide infrastructural facilities and enhance their collective well-being.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to examine the integrated development model and its impact on the provision of infrastructure in Nigeria.

Research Question

To guide the study, one research question was stated: in what ways do the provisions of infrastructure in rural areas enhance the well-being of rural dwellers in Southern and Central Senatorial Districts of Cross River State?

Hypothesis

The study hypothesised that the provision of infrastructure in rural areas does not significantly enhance the well-being of rural dwellers in Southern and Central Senatorial Districts of Cross River State.

Literature

According to Anam (2015), “infrastructures are the basic system that allows a country or economy to function”. He added that “they are basic amenities and services that must be in place for a particular activity or pursuit. These include roads; storm sewers; and mechanisms for the transmission of water, waste products, electricity, telecommunications, and possibly natural gas” (Anam, 2015). Other features of include basic social services, such as fire and police protection, health, postal services, schools, libraries and so on.

The World Development Report of 1994 has the following items as infrastructure,

- i. Public utilities - power, telecommunications, piped water supply, sanitation and sewerage, solid waste collection and disposal and piped gas.
- ii. Public works - roads, major dam, and canal works for irrigation and drainage.
- iii. Other transport sectors-urban and inter-urban railways, urban transport, ports and waterways, and airports (World Bank, 1994).

Infrastructures determine the viability of the economy, systems, especially in rural economic systems. They facilitate economic activities and improve the country's industrial performance. The absence of these economic sub structures is one of the problems of persistent rural poverty in Nigeria. Hodge and Monk (2005) reiterated that “poor rural people often lack roads that link them to markets where they can buy agricultural inputs and sell their agricultural products, or to health centres. Schools are often out of reach, preventing children from getting a primary education and taking advantage of the economic opportunities in the future”. In some rural areas, they maintained that “lack of access to clean water means that people continue drinking water from streams, with dire consequences on their health and as a result, poor rural people continue to live in the vicious circle of poverty” (Hodge and Monk, 2005).

Despite Nigeria's rich endowment with abundant natural, physical and human resources, the incidence of poverty is high. The poverty situation in Nigeria is deplorable and pathetic. The current world development report (200012001) put Nigeria as the 28th poorest country in the world (Leon, 2005). The world poverty reports 1996 and Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) consumer surveys covering household income and expenditure conducted in 1985 and 1992 highlighted the uneven spread of the burden of poverty in Nigeria. There is growing incidence of poverty in rural areas. According to FOS (1999), in 1992, “the rural areas accounted for 66 percent of the incidence of poverty, 72 percent of the depth of poverty and 69 percent of the extremely poor”.

The gap between the rich and poor is widening and this is leading to worse conditions for the poorer population. Keeble and Tyler (1995) added that “the traditional socioeconomic environment of the rural population has often been destroyed without being replaced by a better alternative. The increasing population could not be absorbed by the existing rural system, thus leading to massive migration to cities, and resulting, in many cases, in a virtual breakdown of urban societies”. Agriculture is seen as the major driver of the rural economy but not much has been done to improve this sector of the rural economy. Keeble and Tyler (1995) observed that “measures for increasing agricultural production concentrated on the improvement of land productivity in the better areas with larger farms, leaving behind the poorer masses in the rural areas. It is noteworthy that the increasing differences between haves and have-nots generated by past development are not restricted to the widening gap between rich and poor”. This growing difference affects industrialization in developing countries.

In the final analysis, Treasury (2003) noted that “the reason for unsatisfactory results from past development efforts seems to lie in the basic approach”. This approach promotes development by applying economic principles derived from experiences in developed countries (Hodge, 1997). He stated that “the reassessment of development strategies during the last years tried to surmount the trial-and-error period and to use the experience of the past to design a new strategy which, it is hoped, might yield better results”. In recent years the concept of integrated rural development has been widely accepted as an effective strategy for developing rural areas. The provision of rural infrastructure is significant in promoting economic activities, especially agricultural growth in rural areas. Hodge (1997) said “this has the potential to transform the existing traditional agriculture or subsistence farming into a most modern, commercial and dynamic farming system in Nigeria”.

Components of Integrated Rural Development

According to Lee, Arnason, Nightingale and Shucksmith (2005) “Integrated rural development is both a goal and a methodological approach. The goal is to include the neglected masses of rural poor in the process of increasing the well-being of mankind. The approach for reaching this goal is the application of a bundle of well-balanced measures of economic and socio-political nature”. However, they admitted that the structure and content of this policy framework vary.

Therefore, any approach to rural development has to start with the assessment of the current situation and the identification of existing bottlenecks. The following checklist gives an idea of the internal and external factors to be considered:

- i. Natural resources, agricultural and non-agricultural;
- ii. Human resources (quality and quantity);
- iii. Pattern of social organization (values, social stratification mobility, power structure land tenure system);
- iv. Economic structure (agricultural production structure, industry, market relations, etc.);
- v. Technology in agriculture and in the non-agricultural sector;
- vi. Infrastructure (physical infrastructure, transport and communication, social infrastructure, spatial order);
- vii. Institutions and organizations (administration, people's organization, etc.);
- viii. Services (marketing, credit extension, social security);
- ix. Education and training (formal and informal) (Lee, 2005).

Lee noted further that “the application of measures concerning the sectors listed above-perhaps with some additional ones-to a specific area will allow the identification of the elements promoting and restricting development possibilities, and their interrelationship. Rural poverty is caused primarily by limited access to resources” (Lee, 2005). This set back may be caused by an imbalance between population and available resources. Besides, the problem caused by population growth and access to infrastructures is often limited to the rural poor because of the current socio-political situation. Thus, the limited access to infrastructure is as a result of political neglect by the government. This affects their economic opportunities (Dobay, 2011).

Dobay (2011) maintained that “if access to economic resources and infrastructures, i.e. to the factors responsible for rural poverty, is determined by the general socio-political situation, there cannot be a --"rural" explanation to the rural situation. The reason for the poverty of rural areas is often to be sought outside these very areas”. The main cause of rural poverty is the lack of integration of rural areas into the overall socio-political and economic system of the nation. This holds true, not only for the nation but for the international system as well. The integrated rural development model advocates for rural participation in the development of the areas through needs determination, decision making, and implementation. This implies that the situation of the rural poor can only be improved if they are integrated into the development process.

Methodology

The study is empirical and employs the descriptive research design. Primary and Secondary sources of data were used for the study. Primary data involve information obtained from field survey by the researcher, otherwise known as a first-hand information, while the secondary data are literature from authors; state government and local government publications, text books, journals, unpublished thesis, etc.

The Southern and Central Senatorial Districts of Cross River State constitute the major source where primary data were obtained with the aid of a questionnaire. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling technique. Each senatorial district has 6 local government areas. In each district, 2 local government areas were purposively selected. The selection was based on the similarities in rural infrastructural projects embarked on by the Cross River State Community and Social Development Agency (CRS CSDA). The projects assessed were rural roads, pipe borne water, education and health facilities.

Therefore, in each senatorial district, 2 local government areas were purposively selected for the study. In the South, Akamkpa and Akpabuyo local government areas were selected, while in the Central, Ikom, and Etung local government areas were selected. In each of the local government areas, 35 respondents were randomly selected; this sum to 140 respondents from the 4 local government areas selected from the 2 senatorial districts in Cross River State use for the study. The data obtained were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Ho: The provision of infrastructure in rural areas does not significantly enhance the wellbeing of rural dwellers in Southern and Central Senatorial districts of Cross River State.

Hi: The result obtained shows that the provision of infrastructure in rural areas is significant in boosting economic activities, which in turn enhances the wellbeing of rural dwellers.

Test of Hypothesis

Pearson product moment correlation was adopted to test the hypothesis. This is reported in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Pearson Product moment correlation on the provision of rural infrastructure and the wellbeing of rural dwellers in Southern and Central Senatorial districts of Cross River State.

Variables	N	M	SD	r.value	Sig.
Provision of rural infrastructure	140	14.87	2.86	0.118*	0.00
Wellbeing of rural dwellers	140	16.02	2.74		

****significant at 0.05 level, df = 138, critical r .095**

Source: Field work, 2017

The result in Table 1 reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.118* is greater than the critical r-value of .095 at .05 level of significance with 138 degrees of freedom with this result, the null hypothesis which states that, the provision of infrastructure in rural areas does not significantly enhance the well-being of rural dwellers in Southern and Central Senatorial Districts of Cross River State is rejected while the alternate hypothesis is retained. This implies that the provision of infrastructure in rural areas significantly enhances the well-being of rural dwellers in Southern and Central Senatorial Districts of Cross River State.

This finding supports the arguments presented above that rural infrastructure has a positive impact on economic development in rural areas (Vermeire, et al, 2010). “Social and economic infrastructure can potentially play three roles in boosting the rural economy: as an engine of economic recovery and improved service provision; as part of a process of strengthening institutions, and in stabilisation and peace-building” (World Bank, 2006) and the position of Fredericks (2012) that availability of infrastructure in an area can lead to employment generation for the most vulnerable and/or poor groups. To develop the Nigerian rural landscape and enhance their well-being, government and nongovernmental organisations need to channel their efforts towards the development of infrastructural facilities that are necessary to enhance economic activities in the area.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the foregoing, it is clear that rural development is aimed at improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas that are often relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. Fredericks (2012) reiterated that the process “is an integrated and a comprehensive term that embraces the efforts of individuals, self-help groups, non-governmental and governmental organizations, collective thinking, collective action and participation”. This process needs to focus essentially on the provision of social and economic infrastructure required improving the economic system. Infrastructure raises productivity and lowers production costs, but it has to expand fast enough to accommodate growth.

Rural infrastructure is crucial for agriculture, agro-industries and overall economic development of the rural areas. It also provides basic social and economic amenities that improve the quality of life. Given its importance and huge capital investment required, the government and non-governmental institutions must focus on the provision and sustenance of infrastructure so as to stimulate and sustain economic activities in rural sectors.

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