

Towards Job Creation in Nigeria: a Critical Examination of Job Creating Potentials of Nigerian's Rural Areas

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Abstract

The study examines job creating potentials of Nigerian rural areas. A significant number of Nigeria population lives in the rural areas. Engaging this huge population in productive economic activities will no doubt impact positively on the country's GDP. Ordinary Least Square method (OLS) of the linear regression model was used to analyze the data. The study revealed that agriculture and other economic services such as solid minerals, tourism etc still create job in rural areas and has impact on employment in Nigeria. This further indicates that more jobs can be created in rural areas by focusing on these sectors of the economy i.e. agriculture, solid minerals and tourism. The study also recommends that government should increase investment on social infrastructures such as good roads, electricity, clinics, school, and water in order to facilitate the core sectors of the economy and generate additional jobs in the rural areas.

Keywords: *Job creation, Rural areas, Population*

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Background to the Study

Job creation is the process of providing new jobs especially for the unemployed. It creates an escape route out of poverty. ILO (2008) pointed out that three quarters of the world's poor reside in rural areas. In Nigeria, where 65% of the poor live in rural areas, the poverty level is even more chronic. This is mostly due to widespread unemployment and underemployment. The few jobs that exist offer low pay and are of poor quality. The foregoing makes it necessary to create jobs in the rural areas. Doing business in rural areas is extremely difficult and thus unappealing to entrepreneurs. If the Nigerian government is really serious about job creation, then attention should be refocused on rural communities and their potential to be drivers of growth, job creation and prosperity not only locally but nationally. Therefore, strong determination to identify and tackle the challenges that have left this potential at best untapped is needed especially at national strategic decision-making levels. Rural areas possess great potentials for creation of highly productive jobs, which can lead to economic growth. Prevailing issues such as low levels of income, high unemployment rates, unfavourable demographic conditions, lack of skilled human capital, proximity to markets and inability to access to ready markets for produce, high illiteracy rates and poor infrastructural base have extinguished potential contributions of rural areas to job creation. Clearly, capacity does exist to reverse these prevailing circumstances, if the political will is there. The significant part of the Nigerian's population live in the rural areas, and about 92% of them live in abject poverty despite the abundance of arable land and dominant mineral deposits. The level of poverty in the rural areas is so high that many rural youth move daily to the urban areas, causing untold socio economic woes and hardships in the urban cities. This paper is therefore set to appraise past rural development programmes and review focused sectors that can mass generate employment in the Nigeria rural areas.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to examine job creating potentials of Nigerian rural areas.

The Concept of Rurality

Many see 'rural' as the people and interactions of these people while others deem it to be the nature of the place. According to Takeuchi (2000), rural in this context means any place that has a large concentration of poor people. European Commission (1997), identified rural areas as communities with a population density below 150 inhabitants per square kilometre. Huilett (1993) broadly classified rural areas, based on their integration with the national economy, into three types:

Predominantly Rural Regions

Also referred to as remote rural areas, has the following characteristics:

1. Lowest population
2. Lowest incomes
3. Depend heavily on primary sector employment

Predominantly Urbanized Regions

Also referred to as integrated rural areas, possess the following features:

1. Gaining population from rural areas
2. Employment base is diversified
3. Risk becoming dwelling areas only because of their relative proximity to urban areas.

Significantly Rural Regions

Also referred to as intermediate rural areas, they:

1. Depend on a mix of primary and secondary sectors of employment;
2. Carry out Larger scale farming activities; and
3. Are relatively distant from urban areas.

Simply put, rural areas lie outside towns and cities.

Rural Development: The past and the current Efforts of the Nigerian Government

Creating jobs in the rural areas cannot be achieved without addressing the issue of rural development. Any effort aimed at creating jobs in rural areas will yield no result if there is no sustainable rural development programme in place. Therefore, government has to take the lead role by formulating policies and programmes that will awaken the people to opportunities for higher accomplishment and help to release their initiative. An example is the issue of onion farmers in Kebbi state whose perennial cry for storage facilities, good roads and access to best practices continue to go unheeded in Nigeria, leaving their produce to waste. Rural development can be explained as a wide range of efforts aimed concurrently at various developmental issues such as quality of infrastructure, human resource development, create new businesses for existing and new enterprises and quality of life of rural dwellers. Therefore, rural development policies should be aimed at the provision of medical infrastructure, primary health care, food and shelter, employment opportunities, affordable and compulsory primary and secondary education, loans and other incentives for the benefit of rural dwellers. Available literature shows that successive governments have embarked on several programs aimed at developing rural areas.

Reasons for failure of Rural Development Programmes

Although agricultural development is critical, it is not synonymous with rural development and hence, not sufficient to alleviate poverty and engender prosperity in rural areas. Rural development policy and agricultural policy address different goals by different means; they are not interchangeable but complimentary (Huillet, 1993).

Furthermore, a holistic approach which enlists other sectors such as education, health and infrastructure must be pursued. Rural development is not a one-off thing or a sudden intervention. Instead, it is a series of gradual and progressive steps (Ogidefa, 2010). It is an integrated approach to providing physical, social and institutional infrastructures aimed at creating an ambient environment for the success of rural enterprises and development of the people. Also, community participation is key to the success of rural developmental programmes. This means involving the community in needs analysis, planning and delivering community projects.

According to Kolawole and Torimiro (2006), "While the central role of government is still crucial in the new dispensation, the recipients of the programmes must be given due recognition as they also possess a body of knowledge, which cannot be discountenanced by development experts, or else, they would fail". Community participation engages local knowledge in the execution of development projects. Tomlinson (2002) corroborating this said, "Their engagement is the catalyst, which helps government to tailor inventions more closely to the needs of the poor, helps to derive coordinated solutions and provides ownership of solution, which we know is the key to sustainability". Sustainability of these programmes can be ensured by giving room for communities to assume greater responsibilities. It must also be realized that political instability also hinders sustainability of these programmes as most of them die with the government that initiates them. Sustainability is an important dimension of a successful rural development strategy. Corruption is also a big threat. There is lack of integrity, accountability and transparency in the execution of these programmes (Ogidefa, 2010). Political will and vision are the key and lasting ingredients to releasing the potential of rural areas. Presently, the Nigerian government has expressed the political will to create jobs at the 'community level'. According to the National Employment Policy (2010), government has expressed its commitment to create jobs at the community level: "The government will continue to emphasize rapid and rural development. The rural economic development programme will be aimed at supporting productive enterprises to utilize labour and locally available raw materials in cottage industries. The promotion of off-season activities such as crafts, processing and/or preservation activities will be encouraged to further boost rural employment. Government is to support this strategy particularly for industries that depend on local raw materials and in agro-based industries for enhancing value-added to agricultural products and increased employment generation at community level". This is the right approach if the statement is not just a government political propaganda.

Job Creation Prospects of Rural Areas

This is the main thrust of this paper. No government can create and sustain full employment primarily by means of rural development programmes. The following are three sectors that can be revolutionized to massively create jobs in rural area.

Agriculture

Strong agricultural growth has been a feature of Asian countries that have successfully reduced poverty by improving agricultural productivity. Nigeria can replicate this with its total land mass of 92.4million hectares of which 91million is suitable for cultivation.

Agriculture should be utilized as an engine to raise incomes and purchasing power and generate more employment opportunities as well as stimulate agro- and rural-based businesses. This would in turn promote higher wages, lower food prices, increase demand for agricultural products, manufactured goods and services throughout the economy, creating a multiplier effect that generates jobs in other sectors.

Crops cultivated in Nigeria rot on their farms because local farmers do not have the resources to preserve them or markets to sell them in their own country, not because there are no demand for them. Nigeria's minister of agriculture once said that Nigeria spends 1.3 trillion naira a year (more than \$8.2billion) important basic food items alone. These basic food items include fish, rice, wheat and sugar. Nigeria is the world's second-largest rice importer. The present administration at the federal level seeks to reverse this trend and create 500,000 new jobs in the next four years. In Nigerian rural areas, agriculture can achieve much more, if government can devote efforts towards:

1. Increasing farm productivity
2. Improving linkages with processing industries
3. Increasing access to markets locally and internationally

One sure way of increasing the country's agricultural produce is to significantly increase the population of farmers. The government can increase farm productivity by embarking on the following:

1. Assisting rural farmers make the shift from subsistence to commercial production by helping them focus on market-driven farm management strategies that are environmentally sustainable. This should be done by promoting labour-enhancing innovations which emphasizes labour as against capital-intensive methods. Capital intensive methods undermine the viability of small-scale farming and threaten the livelihoods of small-scale farmers (ILC, 2008).
2. Demonstrating and Promoting efficient farm practices to control weeds and pests, increase harvests and product quality, conserve limited resources, and reduce loss. Intensifying research and development efforts aimed at introducing better seed varieties, improve water management and soil fertility and solve specific local problems.

Another way of increasing agricultural produce is to increase farmers' access to financial services so as to be able to purchase basic materials. This is a huge challenge facing agricultural development efforts all over the world. Only specific banking skills and technologies can meet the financial needs of rural farmers. One approach developed by International Fund for Agricultural Development is the introduction of Rural Credit Cooperatives (RCCs) as the primary rural financial institutions. The role of RCCs is to provide credit to rural areas as well as poor people who usually do not qualify for loans without requesting for physical collateral.

Through the RCC network, rural finance services were integrated into a wider delivery structure through (i) extending finance to potential clients who had not previously approached RCCs; (ii) the assistance of agricultural extension and marketing support, ensuring both that small farmers' new income-generating ventures would be sustainable and that their produce would be sold at attractive prices; (iii) RCC bankers were trained in modern micro-finance appraisal technologies. Such training made it possible for the RCCs to depart from a mere collateral-based lending approach and to adopt a rural finance system based on loan applications.

Solid Minerals

The mining of minerals in Nigeria accounts for only 0.3% of its GDP. The domestic mining industry is grossly underdeveloped, leading to Nigeria having to import minerals that it could produce domestically, such as salt, iron ore or bitumen. Rights to ownership of mineral resources is held by the Nigerian government, which grants titles to organizations to explore, mine, and sell mineral resources.

Solid Minerals is a major contributor to the GDP of South Africa and Gabon. In 2009, mining directly accounted for about 9 per cent of South Africa's GDP, a third of total capitalization of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) and provides 500,000 direct jobs and much more indirect jobs. Solid minerals provide 670,000 and 200,000 direct jobs in USA and Canada respectively. Globally, solid mineral resources is enjoying increasing demand from rapidly growing nations like China and India leading to Canada exporting solid minerals worth \$45.3 billion in 2008. Today, mining accounts for 3.5 per cent of Canada's GDP.

Likewise, Solid Minerals offer Nigeria potentials for not only job creation but also foreign exchange earnings, domestic production and consumption, tax revenue and diversification of our economy from dependence on oil. Nigeria's huge reserves of 37 solid minerals present in every state in the country can contribute up to 3 per cent of GDP and employ at least a million people but it presently contributes 0.3% to GDP and about 350,000 jobs. Solid minerals development is especially critical for rural areas as it employs literates and illiterates alike. The government's approach is to concentrate on the development of a strategic core of *seven Minerals- Coal, gold, Bitumen, Limestone, Barite, Iron ore and Tantalite*. In so doing, government should use the following as a guide: *Policy Consistency & Political Will* For sustainable development to take place in these solid minerals sector there must be policy consistency on the part of government and political will to diversify the economy away from oil must be seen to be in place especially by foreign investors. The challenge is to translate policy, legislation, regulation and intentions into the right attitude and practice in the ministry.

No Government Ownership

Past experiences have shown that government should desist from owning/managing solid minerals ventures as they cannot do this on a sustainable basis.

Strong Regulatory Framework

The solid mineral sector should have a strong regulatory framework that can promote the sector as well as back and bite. Instead of trading in solid minerals, government should focus at getting better at facilitating, regulating and administering the solid minerals sector. Government should equip the Geological Survey Agency in providing more accurate geological information about the mineral deposits. Also, regulation will help avoid the re-occurrence of the recent death of over 100 people in Zamfara from lead poisoning arising from unregulated artisan mining is unfortunate.

Finance is Key

Similar to the agricultural sector, finance is important to the development of the solid minerals sector. The 2007 Mining Act created the Solid Minerals Development Fund to fill the finance gap. Commercial banks shy from financing Mining because of its complexity, high risk and long gestation period. The Fund has to be implemented immediately as stipulated by the law. The solid mineral sector offers viable prospects for mining, mineral processing and the manufacture of a host of intermediate raw materials for local industries as well as for foreign exchange earnings. It presents the opportunity for diversifying Nigeria's hitherto petroleum-dominated economy. Improving the Nigerian mining industry would help curb the growing level of unemployment, rural citizens into the middle class and bring back rural dwellers that left for the city.

Tourism

Rural Tourism is another sector that can be explored and exploited for the purpose of job creation in rural areas. Globally, the Tourism sector generates over 234 million jobs, \$944 billion in receipts, 10.3% of world GDP and 30% of global service exports. (CDS, 2010). African countries such as South Africa, Kenya and Tanzania earn significant foreign exchange from Tourism. Nigeria has to do more in this area as it is presently ranked 12th amongst top 20 fastest growing developing countries in terms of international tourist arrivals. The potential of tourism to create many low-skilled jobs, similar to agricultural and solid minerals sector, in rural areas is huge. According to Igbo and Okpoko (2006), Tourism creates more jobs per unit of capital employed relative to a similar unit of capital invested in another sector. The following needs to be done by the Nigerian government to tap tourism's potential to create jobs for the rural populace:

Identification of Feasible Tourism Opportunities

Developing rural tourism will require undertaking a research of existing natural attractions that do not require broad infrastructural development to become viable. The environmental impact of the tourist on the location and the community must also be assessed.

Strong Community Participation

After identifying a viable tourist site, the input of the populace in the rural area is key. This is because if rural communities do not participate in the project they may not appreciate value and hence, benefit from it. Ignoring this will leave a communication gap between policy makers and the people, which is the main reason behind the failure of tourism development efforts in Nigeria (Danglah, 2010).

Proactive Tourism Development Body

There is need to have in place a body that seeks to promote the development of tourism. One recommendation is the formation of Tourism Development Committees, championed by the local government where the tourist site is located comprising members from the Local, State, Federal levels and representative of the Paramount traditional ruler in that area (Danglah, 2010). Among other things the tourism development body should:

1. Encourage private sector investment through private/public sector partnerships and by creating a conducive environment for doing business in identified rural areas.
2. Identify possible issues in a community that may escalate conflicts into violence. This is highly necessary as violence in any area may wipe out the potential benefit from tourism in such areas.

Research Methodology

To examine the effect of job creation in rural areas on employability rate in Nigeria. Ordinary least square method was adopted to test the overall statistical significance between employment rate (labour force) and the variables like government expenditure on agriculture and other economic services (such as solid minerals, tourism and so on). Basically available data on this study are secondary data obtained from Central Bank of Nigeria annual report that covers the period of 25years from 1991 to 2014.

Model Specification

The methodology employed for this study was based on the following model.

$$LF = \beta_0 + \beta_1 AGR + \beta_2 OES + \mu$$

With the variable defined as follows:

LF	=	Labour force (employment rate)
AGR	=	Expenditure on Agriculture
OES	=	Expenditure on Other Economic Service
β_0	=	Representing Constant
β_1	=	Coefficient of Agricultural Expenditure
β_2	=	Coefficient of Other Economic Service Expenditure
μ	=	Error Term

Techniques of Estimation

The ordinary least square method (OLS) of the linear regression model was used because of the following reasons:

1. The equation is specified in a linear form and fairly easy to compute as compared to economic method.
2. The mechanism of the OLS is simple to comprehend and interpret and
3. The parameters estimated by the OLS method have some desirable optical properties. They are best linear, unbiased estimator.

Apriori Expectation

β_1 and $\beta_2 > 0$

Therefore, β_1 and β_2 is expected to be positive because an increase in government expenditure on agriculture and other economic service (such as solid minerals, tourism and soon) in rural areas will increase employment rate and reduce unemployment in Nigeria.

Data Analysis

In order to validate or reject the hypothesis earlier formulated in this study. There is need to test such hypothesis and thus arrive at valid conclusions. The data adopted in this study include labour force, government expenditure on agriculture and other economic service which covers the period from 1991 to 2014. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is:

H_0 = There is no significant relationship between job creation in rural areas and employment rate in Nigeria

H_1 = There is significant relationship between job creation in rural areas and employment rate in Nigeria.

Interpretation

The interpretation of the results obtained from the regression result is presented below. All estimators are corrected to 2 decimal places. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.662 which means that 66.2 percent of the total variation in the LF is explained by the independent variables which are government expenditure on agriculture and other economic service while the remaining 33.8 percent unexplained variation is being influenced by other factors outside the model but which are captioned by the error term.

The adjusted R^2 is 0.630 which implies that 63 percent of the variation gives an idea on how our model generalizes and ideally the value must be the same or very close to the value of R^2

The Durbin Watson statistics is 1.729; this can be approximately to 2 which indicate the absence of autocorrelation problem. A value ranges from zero to two indicate a strong positive correlation while a value from two to four indicate strong negative correlation. That is, the problem of serial autocorrelation does not constitute a problem in the research analysis.

$$LF = 34583353.747 + 515762.023AGR - 2971.89OES + \mu$$

In the estimated regression of the equation, β_0 which signifies the constant term is 34583353.747 which states that subjecting to the value of independent variables to zero. The labour force will still be 34583353.747.

The coefficient of government expenditure on agriculture (AGR) in the estimated regression line is 515762.023 which states that 515762.023 units increase in AGR will leads to the same units increase in employment rate and reduces unemployment while holding all other variables constant. The calculated T statistics of this parameter estimate is 6.033, the tabulated T statistics at 5 percent level of significance and 21 degrees of freedom is 1.721. Since the value of the calculated T statistics exceeds tabulated T statistics, then the relationship between AGR and LF is statistically significant

The coefficient of government expenditure on other economic service in the estimated regression line is -2971.89 thus negating the apriori expectation which imply that a reduction in the value of OES will leads to decrease in employment rate and increase unemployment while holding all other variables constant.

The T calculated statistics of this model is -0.180 while T tabulated statistics at 5 percent level of significance is 1.721 . Since the value of T calculated is less than T tabulated then the relationship between OES and LF is not statistically significant.

The calculated F statistics is 20.544 and the Pvalue is 0.000 , Ftab is 0.05 . Since the Pvalue of F statistics is less than Ftab ($0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted which states that there is significant relationship between job creation in rural areas and employment rate in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

From the above result, it indicates that only government expenditure on agriculture have variant impact on the dependent variable. The F statistics result at 20.544 with significant value of 0.000 indicating the regression coefficients are significant. Therefore null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. The T statistics value obtained shows that only government expenditure on agriculture is statistically significant under 5 percent level of significance, while government expenditure on other economic services is insignificant. The coefficient R^2 shows a high degree of influence of independent variable on dependent variable at 5 percent level of significance. This implies that the estimated result can be used for policy analysis as well as economic inference.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has recommended sectors where government should demonstrate leadership in order to generate employment especially for the rural populace. These focus sectors are Agriculture, Solid Minerals and Tourism. Two features are common to these sectors. One is their obvious mass job creation capability. Another is their employment of low-skilled labour, which is predominant in rural areas.

However, any efforts put on these sectors will be futile without a planned and pragmatic rural development strategy. The present state of rural areas shows continued neglect by successive administrations and no enterprise can succeed in such an environment. Although these administrations can lay claims to trendy rural development programs, these programs failed for lack of political will, non-involvement of benefiting communities and erroneous belief that agricultural development is synonymous with rural development.

Nigerian government can only record much success if it unleashes rural development by concurrently embarking on both urban as well as rural development and discontinue the 'urban bias'. Government at all levels must reconsider the present poor level of investment in rural areas in order to tap rural areas' potential to create jobs. This will go a long way to fight poverty, eventually leading to national prosperity.

No jobs can be created without investment in social infrastructures such as roads, schools, clinics, water and electricity. These are the basics. Also, rural development on its own cannot create jobs. Government have to lead by providing these basic needs and then create an enabling environment, driven by political will and characterised by public/private partnerships.

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Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
LF	43890072.5000	11952753.33944	24
AGR	18.3688	19.05190	24
OES	56.2554	98.43337	24

Correlations

		LF	AGR	OES
Pearson Correlation	LF	1.000	.813	.275
	AGR	.813	1.000	.364
	OES	.275	.364	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	LF	.	.000	.097
	AGR	.000	.	.040
	OES	.097	.040	.
N	LF	24	24	24
	AGR	24	24	24
	OES	24	24	24

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	OES, AGR ^b	.	Enter

- a. Dependent Variable: LF
 b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	df1
1	.813 ^a	.662	.630	7274896.53877	.662	20.544	2

Model Summary^b

Model	Change Statistics		Durbin-Watson
	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	21 ^a	.000	1.729

- a. Predictors: (Constant), OES, AGR
 b. Dependent Variable: LF

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2174564672405570.500	2	1087282336202785.200	20.544	.000 ^b
	Residual	1111406512645699.000	21	52924119649795.190		
	Total	3285971185051269.500	23			

- a. Dependent Variable: LF
 b. Predictors: (Constant), OES, AGR

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	34583353.747	2114919.331		16.352	.000
	AGR	515762.023	85495.756	.822	6.033	.000
	OES	-2971.890	16547.808	-.024	-.180	.859

Coefficients^a

Model		95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	30185138.225	38981569.269
	AGR	337963.865	693560.181
	OES	-37384.940	31441.160

a. Dependent Variable: LF

Residuals Statistics^a

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	34690328.0000	68057120.0000	43890072.5000	9723491.66219	24
Residual	-21049026.00000	22768380.00000	.00000	6951404.33934	24
Std. Predicted Value	-.946	2.485	.000	1.000	24
Std. Residual	-2.893	3.130	.000	.956	24

a. Dependent Variable: LF