

Overcoming the Problems of Rural-Urban Drift in Nigeria: Some Policy Suggestions

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Abstract

Rural – Urban drift has become a very serious socio-economic problem threatening the peace and development of Nigeria generally. Statistics from Census 2006 have shown that over 70% of Nigerians are living in rural areas. However, as a result of lack of development of the periphery, the reverse has been the case. Almost the same percentage is now in the metropole pursuit of greener pastures, better condition of living in the cities. When better life are no longer realizable as planned, these youthful persons have indulged themselves into evil activities such as thuggery, armed robbery, kidnapping, child/ drug trafficking and all kinds of social vices. The main objective of this work is to determine how to overcome rural-urban drift in Nigeria through some policy suggestions. The major statement of problem is how bringing about sustainable development of the rural areas to forestall all vices endemic in the rural areas and urbanize the rural centers. The theoretical framework is the Ecological Approach drawn from the study of the exponents, Otis. The work adopted both historical and descriptive methodology to comprehend the phenomenon under study. The work faulted policies of past and present regimes that has not planned for the provision and necessary infrastructure in the rural areas that will make life meaningful as is obtained in the metropole. The work recommends the rural development of peripheral areas of the country. It also recommends policy focus on sustained rural modernization and agricultural development should be given attention and incentives that will ginger everyone into productivity.

Keywords: *Socio-economic problem, RURAL-Urban problem and Statistics Census*

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Background to the Study

A majority of some states in Nigeria is predominantly rural setting in which over 75% of the population are living. Yet planning and development efforts of regime have paid lip service to this majority domain. Nwankwo (2006) sees rural area as fundamentally part of an overall area, which can be characterized by the composition of its population, its land use, and its economic activities among others. In fact, the most apparent character of a rural setting is the available vast empty space linking space and specific uses to which it is put. For Weise (1931), the natural trappings which are peculiar to the rural environment determine the Social and Economic activities of the people. In other words, the entire life of the people is predominantly engaged on the land with animals.

On the other hand, Gist and Fava (1965), has observed that the city, town or urban may be many things – a legal entity, a “state of mind” a census definition but ultimately, we must take cognizance of the fact that the city is a physical entity, possessing buildings, streets and people which exist or have all existed, in time and space. It is a common observation that the land area of a city is put to a variety of uses. There are districts serving primarily commercial uses and others manufacturing and transportation. There are areas wholly residential, and sections that are used for leisure time activities and for the official functions of the community.

These areas are not always distinct and clearly defined in terms of use and occupancy; frequently they overlap and interpenetrate in such a fashion as to give impression that they have multiple uses, as indeed they may have. Although rapid industrialization only stated in many African countries after the Second World War, the rise of modern industrial cities in Africa may be said to have begun with the active penetration of the continent by Europeans during the last quarter of the nineteenth century Mabogunge (1976).

It is obvious that one of the most important roles of modern industrial centers in Africa is to stimulate greater local manufacturing of goods compared with pre-industrial craft activities, modern manufacturing, craft activities, modern manufacturing serves as a veritable lever for raising production in all spheres. The processing of Agricultural raw materials, for instance invariably leads to a reduction in weight, less perishability, greater storability and better transportability. This means that the growth of manufacturing involving agricultural raw materials lead to a tremendous expansion in production and makes possible improvements in the techniques and organization of agriculture. It is against this background that this study examined some policy suggestions on overcoming rural urban drift in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Rural is a characteristic of the countryside rather than the town, pastoral, rustic, bucolic agricultural, farming, agearian, arcadian, sylvan, georgic, exurban. Rural encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included with an urban area.

Urban

For 2020 census, an urban area will comprise a densely settled core of census blocks that meet minimum housing unit density and or population density requirements. The United State

Development Agency 2021 define rural as a delineation of built-up territory around small towns and cities was first introduced in 2000. According to this system, rural areas consist of open country side with population densities less than 500 people per square mile and places with fewer than 2,500 people. Census Bureau 2022 defines rural areas as all population, housing, and territory not included within an urbanized area or urban clusters.

Urban: Wikipedia (2022), defines rural as relating to, or a characteristics of a town or city. “The urban population “is synonymous with built-up, town, city, inner city, densely populated, townified non-rural, municipal, civic, borough. National geographic society (2023) defines urban areas to refer to towns, cities, and sub-urban. An urban area includes the city itself, as well as the surrounding areas. Blog.worldbank.org the criteria used by countries to decide whether to define a place as “urban” include population, size, population density. Drift is a continuous slow movement from one place to another, to towns, movements shift, transfer,

An urban area is the region surrounding a city. Most inhabitants of urban areas have non agricultural jobs. Urban areas are very developed, meaning there is a density of human structures such as houses, commercial buildings, rural roads, bridges and railways, high institution and other places of great interest. Rural-urban drifts accounts for about 60% of urban growth because rural-urban inequalities of development force people to migrate. Nigeria Net Migration Rate 2012-2021

Chambers (1974), in his contributions to rural development identified four main reasons why adequate attention should be given to rural populace.

- i. The overwhelming majority of the people lives and find their livelihood in the rural areas.
- ii. The drift to town (rural-urban migration) is a matter of concern because of the increasing rate of urban unemployment, housing problems, increasing crime rate and other attendant social evils.
- iii. It is the rural areas that most of the poor and disadvantaged people are found.
- iv. There is a cluster of now orthodox economic argument for giving priority to rural and particularly agriculture development.

In addition, it could be noted that the main aim of any government is to provide security and welfare of its citizens whether in the rural or urban centers. This shows government's inaction in this direction when infrastructural facilities are made accessible only in the urban areas in expense and neglect of the rural populace.

Furthermore, since the effective growth of manufacturing in a country often leads to significant changes in organizations for capital formation. Mabogunje (1976) has averred that in the type and variety of technical skills required and, in the supply, and caliber of management, modern industrial urban areas serve as a vital agency for modernization and social change in a country.

He acknowledged that manufacturing imposes a certain discipline and organization which come to affect the attitudes, living habits and patterns of behaviour of people. More important

the masses of goods, which it makes easily available dramatically, change people's styles of living, their material needs and their expectations for the future. This primary vote of urban areas as a center of transformation underlies their attraction for an ever-increasing number of migrants from rural areas all over the continent.

For the people, the relative poverty resulting from their subsistence agriculture stands in sharp contrast to the wealth and glamour of the cities. By moving to the cities, most of them hope to improve their skills to earn more money, and to raise their social standing. However, in Africa the extent to which they succeed in this respect for (Mabogunje, 1976) is predicated a lot on the policies pursued by governments on rural urban migration.

In Nigeria in the last decades, the influx of people to the urban centers has been greatly swollen by the addition of numerous school leavers whose education has encouraged them to reject rural existence as a viable way of life. Most of the school leavers are either too young or too inadequately trained to be employable. But they swell the population of cities such as Lagos, Ibadan, Rivers, Kano, Abuja, Kaduna and other while contributing minimally to their economic growth.

This continuous growth of modern urban centers in turn creates fresh problems of its own. In view of the forgoing, the paper attempts to look at the origin of rural – urban areas in Nigeria. Section two deals with the characterization of rural-urban areas in Nigeria. The next section discusses the rationale behind rural-urban. Section four deals problems of rural-urban drift in Nigeria. The last section proffers suggestions on how rural-urban migration could be curbed, while the conclusion and recommendations follow.

Theoretical Framework

The Ecological Approach is adopted in this study to analyze rural-urban drift in Nigeria. Drawn from the sociology the exponents Otis Duncan, P. Hauser (1959) and Gist and Fava (1965) among others. This approach holds that the high visibility both of the city and of the diversity within it makes it surprising that one of the earliest and most widely used approaches to understanding the city has been in term of the interplay between physical and social conditions. It is implicit in human ecology that although the city is not merely a physical thing, it does have a physical component and deals with it systematically.

As a physical entity, the city and its various parts compete for space, with other types of communities and land uses find some localities more congenial for their development than others and have characteristic ways of adjusting to the world around them. This point of view may be applied in two ways;

- i. To the city as a whole in which case it leads to understanding the chronology, distribution, location and type of cities, and
- ii. To the component parts of cities that strikes the eye so forcefully apartment house areas, retail shopping areas, hotels districts, racial, religious or ethnic ghettos, prestige address sections and so on.

In this case, ecology leads to an understanding of the internal structure of the city, the functions performed by the various districts, the changes in population type or land use within sub areas of the city.

The Ecological System

While human ecology is concerned with the interrelationships among men in their spatial setting, urban ecology is especially concerned with these interrelationships as they manifest themselves in the city. Urban ecology includes the study of such external expressions of ecological interrelationships as the distribution of cities or their intentional structure and composition. Much of the sociological literature on ecology is concerned with the distribution in space of people and institution. But spatial distribution is only a starting point in ecological analysis. Human ecology goes further than merely determining where particular functions of these groups are performed. It's also with interactive relationships between individuals and groups and the way these relationships influence or are influenced by particular spatial patterns and processes. It is concerned with cultural, racial, economic and other differences insofar as preferences and prejudices associated with these differences serve to bring people socially or spatially together or keep them apart. Above all it is concerned with the dynamics of the social order insofar as change in the functions of institutions, or changes in patterns of human relationships, bring about ecological changes and so on.

It should be kept in mind that human ecology as a science does not deal with individuals as individuals rather it is concerned with groups of individuals having some common characteristics such as age, sex, income, education, race, marital status and the like. Nor does human ecology deal with individual business forms or industries but with types such as financial institutions, light manufacturing service enterprises and so on. The concerns of human ecology with categories of people or institutions arise from its attempt to describe the system of interrelationships underlying the visible city. Single individuals or commercial enterprises are not self-sufficient but dependent on others who in turn are dependent on them. Accruing from this interdependence is a complex interplay of forces. For this reason, human ecology is always concerned with collectivities. The ecological systems have four elements; population, environment, technology and organization and social psychological factors.

The Ecological Processes

Gist and Fava (1965), avers those ecological processes makes use of a few basic concepts, one of which is centralization. Centralization may be defined as the tendency for people to gather at same pivotal point in a city in order to satisfy their interest fulfill their needs or carry out designated social and economic functions. In common usage, the term implies the tendency to gather at a center pivotal point such a place is the central business district. The term centralization is also applied to institutional functions; thus, we refer to centralization of administrative controls or of certain economic operations.

Decentralization as a concept refers to the shift of institutions from the center of the city towards the periphery.

The Concept of Segregation

There is widespread tendency for person to select an intimate associate other than individuals with whom they share similar interest, values and perhaps social positions. These associational preferences commonly reflect race, nationality, education and so on. When they are manifest in spatial relationships as the tendency of individuals to reside near others with similar characteristics the phenomenon is known as segregation. Segregation is relevant to this study as it is able to explain the rationale behind rural-urban migration in Nigeria. And further helps us to understand that government policy on decentralization of infrastructures such as, pipe borne water, electricity, good roads, standard health facilities, good school, location of industries and provision of revolving loans to farmers in the rural area would go a long way to address the trend.

Origin of Urban Centres

The most impressive fact about the origin of cities is that they appeared recently in the history of mankind. Braidwood and Willey (1962) is of the opinion that this is true despite the fact that the first cities appeared about five or six thousand years ago (3000-1000 BC). Although the span encompasses all of written history for record keeping emerged only with cities. It is very short when compared either with the half million years the human species has been on earth or with the 40,000 years that physical modern man, *Homo sapiens* has existed. Put another way the 6,000 years man's urban existence represent only slightly more than one percent of his total existence on earth and only about 10% of his existence as physical modern man. Furthermore, cities remain a rarity and were the place of residence of only a tiny fraction of the human population until the last century or so. Even today, only about 20% of the World's Population lives in cities (Piggot, 1961).

For Mabogunge (1965), apart from the Nile valley, there were four other areas of pre-industrial city development in Africa. All of these were stimulated by conditions similar to those of Nile valley, namely, abundant agricultural surplus, effective administration and the presence of non-farming specialist produces. The four areas were, (a) The North African coastland (b) Sudan belt of West Africa (c) The Eastern Guinea Forest (d) The East African coastland.

Characteristics of Urban Areas

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of modern or urban cities is their capacity for rapid growth. This has meant an increasingly wide range in their size distribution, from the small town to the multi-million city.

Mabogunge (1976), stated that demographic pattern, social institutions, economy are the main features of urban areas. He argued that the demographic character of this urban population offer some very illuminating contrasts to that of the rural areas. This so because to him, the growth of population in the cities is the result of natural increase and migration from rural areas, its rate is usually much higher than that of the country as a whole.

He concludes that this constant assertion from the rural areas has important significance for the age and sex distribution of the city population. In general, there is preponderance of young

adults (those within the age group 15 to 49) as compared with children and old people. Moreover, because of the nature of jobs available in the cities at present, young adult males tend to be more numerous than young adult females.

Methodology

New social instructions

Gist and Fava (1965) is of the view that social factors, contribute to the growth of urban centers. To him, urban development in Western civilization advanced not only in response to industrialization but as a consequence of a transformation of the social structure. Other growth promoters include environmental factors and technological factors.

Rationale Behind Rural-Urban Flooding and its Attendant Problems

The primary attraction of cities in modern Africa is that they offer hopes of tremendous employment opportunities as well as the glamour of a new and more exciting life. These expectations often lead many people to migrate from rural areas to the cities. The presence creates new problems in the cities and aggravates existing ones. Of the problems, (Mabogunge, 1976) stated four of such particular important as to merit some defied treatment. These problems are unemployment, housing, traffic congestion and administration:

1. Urban Unemployment

The first concern of anyone coming to live in a city is to get a job. Yet, for various reasons these jobs are not forthcoming and unemployed people in their thousands roam the streets of many urban centers. It is possible to identify the following five categories of unemployed.

- i. School leavers actively seeking jobs but unable to find or unwilling to accept any kind of employment.
- ii. Juvenile, too young to be fit for heavy manual work or who would prefer to be in school but lack financial support.
- iii. Rural unemployed (or unemployed) who add permanently to the pool of those in the urban areas seeking work.
- iv. Those who become unemployed for technological reasons
- v. Those unable or unwilling to hold down a job on a regular basis.

2. Housing

The housing problem is a logical extension of the rapid rate of growth of the urban population and the high level of unemployment. For thousands of immigrants flocking the cities, shelter is always the major initial requirements. This may be provided by relations in cheap housing. The result is an appalling and chronic condition of overcrowding and high rate of deteriorations of existing housing supply.

3. Urban Administration

The solution to most problems of rural-urban flooding is dependent to a large extent on the quality and effectiveness of urban administration. It is true that the resource of the rural areas is used to develop the urban centers at the expense of the rural areas. The urban administration has the responsibility of providing public health, sanitation, markets, transports, primary and secondary education, water supply, minor roads and

sewage disposal, while the source of finance comes from taxation, profit of commercial enterprises, license dues, rents on properties and allocation from federation account. The mismanagement of these funds in turn cause a setback in the hitherto development of rural areas. There are these infrastructural facilities such as pipe borne water, electricity, good roads, health facilities, schools, and industries, there is that propensity for them to flood urban centers where they feel these facilities are readily available.

4. Traffic Congestion

One of the major tests of efficiency with which a city carries out its various functions is the ease and speed of circulation within it. The result is that for a high proportion of urban workers, movement in the city is either on foot, motorbike or cars. The variety of forms of transport creates a chaotic traffic situation in most cities in the countries such as Lagos, Kano, Ibadan, Port Harcourt and other important urban areas. This remarkable development in vehicular traffic has brought to fore the urgency of improving the road network in the cities.

Other problems associated with rural-urban migration is that it has posed a common threat to the urban residents by increasing incidence of crime such as kidnapping, man-napping, armed robbery, drug addiction, congestion and pollution. The qualitative descriptive research methods were used to carry out this investigation as data were derived principally from secondary sources. The goal of qualitative descriptive studies is a comprehensive summary in everyday terms of specific events experienced by individual or group of individuals. Hence, the qualitative description method is used to collect and analyse data from overcoming the rural urban drift in Nigeria.

Data derived for the study are mainly source from textbooks, journal articles and other online internet materials for the study. Statistics from sources stating the percentage changes from 2012-2021 a period of 10 years, regarding the projected population of 170,000,000 million people in 2012 and the percentage drifting from rural to urban areas in Nigeria.

Table 1: Percentage Rural-Urban drift Changes from 2012-2021

S/N	Year	Projected population in millions	Percentage drift	Percentage increase	Population Increase in millions every two years
1	2012	170	45.25		
2	2013	174	46.12	0.87	4m
3	2014	179	46.98		
4	2015	183	47.84	0.86	4m
5	2016	188	48.68		
6	2017	193	49.52	0.52	5m
7	2018	198	50.34		
8	2019	203	51.16	0.82	5m
9	2020	208	51.96		
10	2021	213	52.75	0.79	5m

Sources: From the Authors Compilation 2023

Findings and Discussion

It is observed that from the projected population of 170,000,000 million people in at 2012, 45.25 percent of the people drifted to Urban centres across the (36) thirty-six states of the federation. Meaning that 93,676, 000 million people had drifted to the urban centres during the period under study.

Moreover, from the projected population between 2012-2013, it was revealed that addition four million people drifted to the urban centres. The same event applied to years 2014 and 2015. But from 2016 to 2021, five (5) million people drifted to urban cities. Making a total of 108,000,000 million people in the urban metropolitan areas. The rural-urban drift apart from the search for employment purposes, better living conditions, education, economic and other social welfare in the urban centres, the movement could also be as a result of insecurity across the country.

Suggestion on how to Curb Rural-Urban Drift in Nigeria.

Policy Focus on Sustained Rural Modernizations

The policy of promoting a more rapid development of rural areas through a sustained effort to raise agricultural productivity and provide basic human needs such as hygiene, water supply, health facilities, access roads, electricity, cottage industries and Deconcentration of industries in urban centers to rural areas, this will help to counter-balance the strong trend towards rural-urban drift.

Moreover, modernization policy of the rural area is important and necessary; it is not sufficient to stem the ebb and tide of rural migrant to urban area. The rationale being migrant from rural to urban is the quest for opportunity to make a living. Therefore, the tide could only be stemmed if lucrative employment opportunities are created along with the modern amenities. Indeed, considering the rough life that awaits every employed rural migrant into urban centers, very few if any reasonable migrants would like to leave their rural communities if they can afford good jobs there. Moreso, in Africa, the agricultural sector is faced with many problems. Among them is the restricted access to goo agricultural land in region where land area per capita is continually decreasing as a result of the increasing population growth. Yet it is in these regions where the demand for agricultural products is continually rising. Consequently, there is need o intensify land use.

Again, African governments by and large have neglected food production. Too many African countries have hurt agriculture by diverting resources to urbanization and industrialization. Overvalued currencies frequently discouraged agricultural exports and production while sustaining food imports from urban areas. High wage, high-cost industries draw labour and capital from agriculture and increase its operating costs. The resource booms of Nigeria and other countries in the 1970s increased wages and the returns on capital in non-agricultural sectors, generally, especially in the service industries, sucking labour and savings out of agriculture. Agricultural development needs public capital invested in roads and railroads, in telephone and electric utilities, and in water, irrigation and flood control.

Other Measures include: Reversing poor food performance. To reverse the vicious cycles in food production in Nigeria will require placing food production at center stage. This will entail serious commitment of resources, at the expense of non-food sectors. The starting must be changes in policies, improvements in labour and land (Mellor and Delgado, 1987).

Spore (1994) has it that Africa remains a rural society largely dependent on agriculture and pasturism. Even in oil-rich Nigeria, agriculture is still the major producer of national income. Eighty percent of Africans live in the rural areas and produce four-fifths of national output. Yet their needs, together with the opportunity to build a strong rural economy, have been bypassed. Instead, government has given priority to the demands of the 20% of their people settled in towns. By focusing resources on urban and industrial development, many governments, have placated urban concentrations of population, who might otherwise have proved de-stabilizing, politically. This therefore suggests that for Nigerian government to survive economically, the only option is to invest in, mobilize and develop the rural sector. In the past many governments have govern commitments to do this. As long as 1980 the Lagos plan of Action for economic development of Africa, which was approved by the special session of the session of the Assembly of heads of state and government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), affirmed the need for an effective agricultural revolution in Africa. The assembly insisted that policies had to emphasize consistently the need not only to improve the living conditions of the farmers and rural dwellers but also to increase real farm income as a means of making agriculture more attractive and remunerative.

At least 25 to 30 percent of the national budget should be directed to the agricultural sector because the road for effective agricultural development is through the development of the rural populace since about 80 percent of the population lives in the rural area. Almost everywhere in the world, a firm foundation of rural development has been an essential precursor to industrial growth. It should be noted that economic rural activity is agriculture, and a healthy agriculture provides food, self-sufficiency, employment and surplus for exports. It also forms the basis for small-scale industrialization based on agricultural service industries including agro-processing, manufacturing and repair of farm implements, transports, and the financial infrastructure for banking and credit.

As successful small businesses grow, experience and resources are available for investment in new ventures. Meanwhile the rural population, provided with employment opportunities, both in agriculture and its supporting services and industries, can remain for the most part in their home towns and villages, mass migration to cities is avoided, together with the strain on urban services that unplanned settlements invariably cause.

The participatory approach to rural development: Failures in rural development go beyond lack of sufficient investment; much of the investment that has been committed to rural sector has not achieved expected target causes include inappropriate design and implementation of projects and ineffective support services. Rural people are central to any rural development projects, yet seldom has project. When expatriate planners or government policies are made without consulting the rural people, who would play meaning roles, such policies fail easily.

Where agriculture is the focus of rural developments driven, farmers require inputs, credit and marketing services. Finance is the lubricant if not the fuel of commerce and if agriculture is to develop beyond subsistence and bartering, government funding organizations and commercial banks will have to be more forthcoming with the credit facilities required. There is need for education. Education raises expectations and kinders aspiration to do more than manual work. School leavers, graduates and others should be encouraged to venture into agro-allied businesses through the provision of enabling environment, infrastructures in rural areas as well as loan to boost agriculture.

New Efficient Farming Practices must be introduced: This should be based on persuading conservative, risk avoiding, resources poor farmers to become more innovative. This must be achieved within a framework of fluctuating commodity prices, erratic policymaking and increasing financial constraint. Functional, efficient and cost effective advisory and distribution services to farmers are major prerequisites to achieving longer-term sustainable food production and rural area development.

Conclusion

Agriculture used to provide employment and income for the majority of the people but more recently some alarming changes have started taking place most especially with the oil boom. Young people are looking elsewhere for employment, being drawn away from agriculture. This is a result of their poor perception of agriculture as a career, a perception which is bolstered by the behaviour of government which favour industry, mining and tourism, (Satae, 1994). Against this background, agriculture has a key role to play in any society; it cannot entirely be replaced by such alternative sources of income. Rural – urban migration could be curbed when the rural areas of the country are industrialized.

Recommendations

Based on the above, these recommendations are made;

- 1) There should be a change of attitude by our leaders towards agriculture and the development of the rural sector. The lack of government support or policy inaction for agriculture in Nigeria has resulted in farming having a very poor image. Agriculture is often associated with hard labour and low income, causing people, young school leavers and unemployed to move away from agriculture to other promising professions.
- 2) Leaders should develop a rural base support for agriculture. It is important to make clear that agriculture provides a secure economic and culture base for our people and must be maintained to keep our society afloat.
- 3) Prioritization of rural areas; government must devote up to 25 percent of the annual budget to the development of agriculture and the rural sector this will in turn create jobs to decongest migration.
- 4) The younger generation should be attracted to agriculture for the development of the rural areas as well as the promotion of agriculture as a scientific employment.
- 5) Modernization of the current agricultural sector and making available sufficient resources for research and training, together with support for infrastructural facilities the full potential of rural sector driven development could be realized.

In sum, the rural areas should be equipped with the provision of standard health care facilities, good educational institutions, electricity, good road network, water supply and increase incentive to agricultural products and equipment.

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