



Social Perception of Development Programmes and Rural Transformation in West Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Development is a desirable phenomenon; particularly in the rural areas that had been neglected due to lack of infrastructural facilities despite numerous rural development programmes adopted in Nigeria. The effect of which include rural-urban migration with increase pressure on existing socioeconomic infrastructures. This has led to the collapse of the rural economy. Objectives of the study include to examine the role of development programmes on rural transformation in the study area; to evaluate the development programmes' contribution in reducing poverty in the study area and to examine government efforts in the development of rural transformation in the study area. The study adopted bottom –up approach as theoretical framework. Survey design was adopted for the study, while the population of the study was 158,678 and 380 respondents as the sample size. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to drawn the sample. The data was collected using questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using simple frequencies and percentage tables, and ANOVA statistical tool was employed for the test of hypothesis. The findings indicated lack of provision of social infrastructures such as good roads, schools, water, electricity, health, agricultural facilities and poor standard of living due to poverty hinders rural development. Findings also indicated that with adequate provision of infrastructural facilities in the study area, the economic growth of the area improved and transformed. In conclusion, to achieve a sustainable socioeconomic development in the study area, there is the need to transform the rural sector by undertaking a conscious and systematic formulation of an integrated rural development programmes with good implementation. The study made the following recommendations; government should provide requisite social infrastructures, and governments at all levels should be committed to rural transformation.

Keywords: *Development programme, Rural Transformation, Rural Area, Infrastructural facilities*

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Background to the Study

Rural transformation is viewed as a panacea, route or mechanism to development, and that development will be near impossible if the rural area is not adequately attended to. Rural transformation is perceived as a total overhauling of the rural system from the monopoly of an agrarian outlook to an all-inclusive life programme of service generating and manufacturing engendered outlook. However, in the real sense what rural transformation engenders is the rapid and radical restructuring such as changes in agricultural intensity, crop selection patterns, land productivity and farm income, labour and technological productivity as well as major improvements in rural housing, economic and social conditions resulting from industrialization (Long, David & Peter, 2011 cited in Ngah, 2012).

Olokun (2002) stated that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) seek to attend to the development; particularly poverty eradication goals and issues of 189 countries of the United Nations (UN). As an active member of the UN, Nigeria is decisively involved in the implementation of the policy framework of the goals by putting in place her own plans and policy structures that would enhance the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the country. This policy framework is the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which aimed at eradicating poverty as well as bringing about sustainable development through agencies such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP).

Asian Development Bank (2007) asserted that rural development has become one of the major aims of various assistance/intervention programmes of both individual developing countries and multilateral institutions/donors. Over the past five decades, Nigeria has never been short of programmes and reforms aimed at alleviating the failing rural economy, livelihood, insecurity and other specific policies associated with poverty alleviation and rural community sustainable development. The document of Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) at 20 (2010) illustrated that, majority of these programmes developed complications over the years. In recent years, the development programmes of many countries in Africa have placed increasing emphasis on rural development generally. It is on this basis that Madji (2005) points out various countries in Africa try to solve their problems of national development through the adoption of various rural development programmes. Some of these countries and the programmes they adopted include: Ethiopia's Walomo Agricultural Development Programme in 1970; Kenya's Special Rural Development Programme in late 1960s; Malawi's Lilongwe Land Development Programme in 1967; Tanzania's Ujuaama Village Programme in 1965; and Egypt's Village Irrigation Programme in 1982 (Mabogunje, 1991).

Since Nigeria gained her political independence in 1960, there has been a great impetus attached to the rural development as factor that advances the overall socioeconomic development of the developing countries of the world outside 'Development Administration'. It is this reality as highlighted by Alege (2005) that has made the government at different times to set up various programmes and specialized credit institutions in an attempt to transform and develop rural areas in all its ramifications and thereby moving rural dwellers from abject poverty and squalor to economic and social prosperity. Alege (2005) added that some of these

programmes and credit institutions are yet on-going, some are moribund and others have gone with the regimes that initiated them. Ibietan & Oghator (2013) noted that successive governments have indicated desire to transform the country, be it in terms of provision of infrastructure, human capacity development and even in the realm of social cum political development.

As a matter of fact, Okoli (2004) in Onah (2004) said, Nigeria has had many development plans including the First National Development Plan (1962 – 1968); Second National Development Plan (1970 – 1974); Third National Development Plan (1975 – 1980); Fourth National Development Plan (1981 – 1985); the three Rolling Plans 1990 – 1992, 1993 – 1995, 1996 – 1998. There was also Vision 2010 and Nigeria 2020 and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). According to Sam (2014), there have been attempts by successive regimes in Nigeria at poverty reduction and rural development, the approaches have usually been determined by the interpretation given to rural development by the different regimes. Prominent among these programmes as he noted are:

- a. 1972 – National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank;
- b. 1976 – Operation Feed the Nation to teach the rural farmers how to use modern farming tools;
- c. 1979 – Green Revolution Programme to reduce food importation and increase local food production;
- d. 1986 – Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI);
- e. 1987 – National Directorate of Employment (NDE);
- f. 1993 – Family Support Programme and the Family Economic Advancement Programme;
- g. 2001 – National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to replace the previously failed Poverty Alleviation Programme; and
- h. 2004 – National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS); meant to achieve poverty reduction through wealth creation, employment generation and value re-orientation.

In the same way, there have been numerous programmes at federal, state and local government levels. These include: Accelerated Poverty Alleviation Programme, School to Land Programmes, Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN) 1987, Community Bank (CB) 1990, National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA) 1991, Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLP) 1987, National Directorate of Employment (NDE) 1986, the National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme, Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), the National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND) 1989, 7 point Agenda 2007, Integrated Community Development Project, State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS), Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDS), the Transformation Agenda 2011 and the Six Key Social Protection Programmes 2015 (Change Mantra). Sam (2014).

Institutions that are central to bringing about rural development in various states of the country vary from one state to the other. For instance, in Nasarawa state, there are Nasarawa Agriculture and Development Project (NADP), Nasarawa State Fadama III Project (NSFP), Badakosi Agriculture Scheme (BAS), Nasarawa State Youth Empowerment Scheme (NAYES), the State Millennium Development Goals (SMDGs), just to mention but few. While in Plateau state, there are Plateau Agriculture and Development Project (PADP), Direct Labour Agency (DLA) and Plateau State Agency for Water Supply and Sanitation (PRUWASA). Despite the numerous rural development policies introduced at different times by successive governments coupled with the huge financial and material resources employed, little or nothing was felt at the rural level as each policy has often died with the government that initiated it before it starts to yield dividends for the rural dwellers.

Nigeria is richly and hugely endowed in both human and natural resources; in spite of this, the people are still heavily impoverished, and despite the country's vast oil wealth and abundant human resources, development remain a daunting challenge. This is a mystery that calls for intellectual discourse through a process of logical reasoning in order to arrive at solutions that would cause change in the tide of things. This study is to identify the causes of rural stagnation and retrogression that have become a major foundation to corroborate previous works on the way forward. Conscious steps can be taken to actually bring about a drastic change for the better. Unfortunately, none of these programmes have been able to radically change the poor standard of living in rural Nigeria and rural West Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State as most of them are deficient in in-depth insight and systematic frameworks for realization.

Okhankhuele & Opafunso (2013), claimed that several methods to remove rural-urban development gap have been carried out in Nigeria with little success; therefore, the rural areas still remain highly underdeveloped in comparison with the urban areas. The wealth which built modern whether in the era of dominance of agricultural commodities or petroleum, was derived from the rural areas. Notwithstanding this, we have witnessed even in the not-too distant past, the virtual neglect of these rural areas and their population. The recent phenomenon of massive importance of food and growth of slums in our major cities along with its attendant social, political and economic consequences have been the result of the collapse of the rural economy and infrastructure (Omeruah, 1985, in Obiukwu, 1992). there is little doubt that Nigerians have reaped more deficit than dividends of rural development programmes. Some of the past studies linked the causes of rural-urban migration to unbalanced government policies in support of urban development, response to disparities in income, employment and other social-economic services available within the metropolitan and countryside, with the urban area being fortunate. Others associated it with impulsive, emotional, structural and traditional factors. The need to empower the local people responds to the growing recognition, local people in developing countries lack control over resources and opportunity to participate in decision making processes. Unless rural people are empowered to participate in the development process, development efforts will only have partial positive effects if at all they have any positive effect.

Objectives of the Study

This paper is social perception of development programmes and rural transformation in West Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. However, the specific objectives of the paper were:

- i. To examine ways by which development programmes transform rural areas in the study area.
- ii. To evaluate the development programmes' contribution in reducing poverty in the study area.

The study also raised the following research questions:

- i. How does development programmes transform rural areas in the study area?
- ii. What are the contributions of development programmes in reducing poverty in the study area?

Statement of the Hypothesis

The study looks at the following hypothesis:

H₁: There is significant relationship between social infrastructures (roads, schools, electricity, health and water) and rural transformation in the study area.

Theoretical Anchorage

The study adopts theory of the Bottom-up approach to rural development. This approach was put forward by Stohr & Taylor (1991) in rigorous search for solving rural problems of neglect, under – privileged and deprivation. Adefila, (2012) maintained that the approach seeks to remove draw – backs of centre - down which concerns controlling the back-wash effects of localization of economic growth and development. In contrast to top – down, (Adefila, (2012) observed that they acknowledge the fact that implementors think about the rural development intervention to be provided and those rural dwellers also have a choice of forming their own opinion about the idea.

Basic Assumptions of the Bottom-Up Approach

This model is also seen as the re-distributive justice or mobilization model. To this model, it is unjust to concentrate development in the urban centres to the neglect of the rural majority peasants and farmers. This model laws emphasis on human beings as the centre of development and not just as object of development. It prefers a development process that the people are involved in taking critical decisions affecting their well-being, especially in the formation of policies and programmes that affect them e.g. rural development in Tanzania under Nyerere, China under Chairman Mao and the Israel Kibbutz (Aziz, 1978; Nyerere, 1967).

This model, also referred to as the mobilization approach, encourages the, “pooling together, harnessing, activating, actualizing and utilizing potential human and material resources for the purpose of development” (Ujo, 1994).

Relevance of the Bottom-up approach to the study

Nkom (1995) supports the bottom-up approach because popular grass-root institutions such as cooperatives, community development associations, youth clubs, age-grade associations, occupation groups, women associations, to mention just but few, provide the platform for concretizing people's involvement in development, and the harnessing of local resources, talents, and creativity for development. There are other packages under the participatory model (Bottom-up) which include: the small-farmer cooperatives, small packages for target groups, area development projects, and private ownership with state management for example, the Moshav in Israel, rural workers programme and the landless e.g. land redistribution and micro credit schemes.

Literature Review

In this section, related empirical literatures on social perception of development programmes and rural transformation, ways by which development programmes transform rural areas and the development programmes' contribution in reducing poverty are discussed.

Concept of Development

Chambers (1983) defines development as implying good change. Though, the definition of development may not be uniform, it is generally associated with a positive connotation-progress: directed at efforts aimed at improving conditions of life (Peet & Hartwick, 1999). Development can either be a gradual historical process of change - imminent development, referring to a spontaneous and unconscious process of change; or a planned rapid change, intentional development, which forms the deliberate policies and actions of the state or development agencies deliberate efforts to attain higher levels in relation to set objectives (Allen, Tim, Alan and Thomas, 2000).

In addition, Muoghalu (1992) also observed that development aimed at improving the living conditions of the people through the effective management of both the human and material resources. In this light, the meaning of development has evolved from its earlier narrow conceptualization with economic growth in aggregate economic indicator of GNP to a broader based conceptualization as a multi-dimensional process involving change in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty (Muoghalu, 1992). Ngah (2012) citing Bello & Long et al (2011) said development is complex and multi-dimensional; it entails process as in the social, economic, cultural and other facets of life. Throughout human history, men have sought to increase their ability to conquer the environment with a view to improving their standard of living. The process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well – being of people is generated through strong partnerships between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society could be termed development. It is important to know that development is not only an economic exercise, but involves both socioeconomic and political issues and covers all aspects of life in the society. Development entails qualitative and quantitative increase in the capacity skills, creativity and general materials well - being of individuals. The key issues that development tends to address are referred to as the indicators of development; they are inequality, unemployment, and poverty. Development is the

transformation of community into socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly and materially desirable conditions, with the aim of improving the quality of life of the people. It is also referred to as the uniform distribution of resources, the integration of the people into national economy, it is a socioeconomic process which seeks to bring about a more equitable distribution of resources and income within the society.

According to Ohagwu (2010), development is not the same thing as change, growth or modernization, but the nature, content and course of a society; it is the choice about goals for achieving the realization of human potential. Gboyega (2003) describes development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It seeks to improve personal physical security and livelihoods and expansion of life chances. Naomi (1995) believes that development is usually taken to involve not only economic growth, but also some notion of equitable distribution, provision of health care, education, housing and other essential services all with a view to improving the individual and collective quality of life. Nwanegbo & Odigbo (2013) asserted that development could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved.

According to Bello (2011), development usually means improvement; it is an event constituting a new change in a changing situation, and it is qualified as follows: economic development, human development, etc. To him, economic development and tertiary development suggest an increase in the per capita income of the economic system bringing about an increase in economic growth, while human development indicates long and healthy life. He further gave that knowledge and a decent standard of living measured by life expectancy at birth, thereby generating empowerment, self-reliance and a general improvement in community and social relationships, and social relationships, and sustainable development means meeting the needs of the present as well as the future generation. Tertiary development envisages poles of attractions for human activities as result of the interrelationship between the rural and urban areas.

Similarly, Okoli & Onah (2002) asserted that development involves progression, movement and advancement towards something better. Okoli & Onah (2002) emphasized further that the movement should be on both the material and non-material aspects of life. In essence, development goes beyond economic and social indicators but it includes the improvement of human resources and positive change in behaviour. In any case, Okoye (2000) observed that the prevailing conception of development connotes essentially improvement in the wellbeing of the people. Indeed, Oyehbaire & Odagunja (1992) stated that basic to any development process is man's desire to a better life and better environment. Based on Oyehbaire & Odagunja's (1992) observation, it implies that the people must be empowered to be able to

meet their basic needs of food, housing, health, transport, education, employment, reduction in poverty level and increased per capita income among others. This is what is lacking, according to Oyehbaire & Odagunja (1992), in the rural areas of Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa where about eighty percent of the population live in the rural areas.

Concept of Rural Transformation

Lenin (1967) posited that, transformation is a process of change that is progressive; it is ascension from a lower to a higher stage. Rural transformation therefore can be seen as the improvement in the rural existential conditions. This can be facilitated by progressive conscious efforts of the state or government to improve the conditions of those residents in the rural areas (Otaki, 2005). For Coker (1990), rural transformation can be described as a design to improve the economic and social conditions of rural inhabitants, which must involve strategies for extending the benefits of the development of the rural majority. Similarly, Ogunnowo (1997) asserted that rural transformation is a process of mobilizing and harnessing human and material resources of all the rural populace with a view to improving their socioeconomic situations through qualitative and quantitative changes. Rural transformation is a process in which a set of technological, socio - cultural and institutional measures are implemented for the inhabitants of the rural areas, with the aim of improving their socioeconomic status or living condition in order to achieve a balance by filling the local and the national sectors. Onigu (1990) summed it up when he defined rural transformation as the increasing structural differentiation of rural societies with increasing opportunities for more productive occupations and for higher standard of living. He gave higher standards of living to include better education, health, housing and leisure.

Furthermore, RDP-concept paper (2000) viewed rural transformation as a synchronized, complex, four-fold transitions of economy, politics, administration and society. Rural transformation promotes opportunity for synergy in decision-making and practice, requires adequate understanding or appreciation of the rural conditions and meets the vision for rural development. Rural development is a process of social and economic change. It is a complex phenomenon and it is invariably linked to development in other parts of the economy as well as regionally and globally. Intervention measure arising from a comprehensive and clear rural transformation strategy will have spillover effects on urban development, in terms of increased supply of food and other materials and reduced pressure in urban areas. Rural transformation as conceptualized above has substantial implications for how rural development programmes are designed and implemented. Improving the living standard of the rural population involves mobilization and allocation of resources to meet the social welfare and productive services of the rural population. It also implies increased mass participation and paying attention to vulnerable members of the community. Finally, it means making the rural development process sustainable and self-sustaining. This requires development of appropriate skills and implementing capacity and creation of institution at the local, regional and national level to ensure effective use of resources. It also requires devolution of powers to local governments. (RDP-Concept Paper, 2000).

As the concept of rural transformation entails, the key strategic areas for rural transformation include rapid infrastructure and energy sector developments, sustainable information and communications technology to achieve regional integration and economic development, education/human resources development to facilitate the growth of the culture of education for job-creation and self-employment through increased availability of opportunities for vocational training, agriculture and rural development since agriculture continue to play a key role in enhancing economic growth and reducing poverty and hunger in many developing countries. Most of the countries that have failed to launch an agricultural revolution remain trapped in poverty, hunger and economic stagnation. Therefore, sustainable rural transformation; reforms are critically needed to achieve sustainable rural development and agriculture transformation with special attention to the value addition which could trigger agricultural reform in Africa (RDP- Concept Paper, 2000).

In relation to the transformation initiative undertaken by the Nigerian government, the term connotes the rapid and fundamental changes to be pursued by the government to achieve certain goals within the framework of vision 2020. Transformation focuses on changes that are material in nature; in particular, the transformation of the economic activities (Coker, Ekpeyong & Gideon 2012; Ngah, 2012).

The study adopts the conception of rural transformation from the point of view of Onigu (1990). He conceived rural transformation on the basis of the following indices:

- (i) Increasing structural differentiation
- (ii) Increasing opportunities for more productive occupations
- (iii) Higher standard of living

To expatiate on Onigu (1990) above, increasing structural differentiation here refers to the rural areas being provided with development projects such as road networks, schools, electricity, water, health and agricultural facilities open an opportunity for people of different backgrounds to migrate to rural areas in order to engage in one thing or the other. This development projects invariably increase the population of the rural dwellers. In this sense, the rural areas are being transformed as a result of influx of new migrants due to the present of infrastructural facilities and agricultural facilities.

In addition, increasing opportunities for more productive occupations refer to a situation whereby opportunities to engage in more productive and meaningful occupations increase the income of rural dwellers. Also, the farmers in the rural areas are enlightened by extension service officers on modern methods of farming by providing the farmers with modern working tools thereby increasing their yields and boost their income generation levels. More so, other productive occupations such as barbing, hairdressing, phone and battery charging, ice-block making, viewing centres, grinding of foodstuffs, peeling of melons and groundnuts spring up in the rural areas as a result of the presence of social infrastructures. This invariably reduces rural-urban migration of youths thereby curbing the menace of urban congestions, crimes and other social vices associated with urban areas and indirectly transforming the rural areas. Furthermore, rural transformation as a result of development projects in the rural areas

enhances higher standard of living of the rural dwellers such as better education, improved health care facilities, improved housing and sanitary as well as waste disposal systems, and adequate leisure. This occurs due to the improved working conditions of rural dwellers that make them afford better education for their children thereby eliminating ignorance, reduction in the rate of infant and maternal mortalities, reduction in the contamination of water borne diseases and promotion of adequate leisure to rural dwellers through the provision of recreational facilities where rural dwellers can relax after work thereby promoting longevity of life span of rural dwellers.

Concept of Poverty

Osinubi (2003) and World Bank Report (1996) agreed that poverty is a concept that defies an objective definition because of its multi-dimensional nature. To them, it depicts a condition of insufficient and inadequate resources; it is also an inability to attain a minimum standard of living and also where material means of sustenance within a given society is hardly enough for subsistence. This is a life situation characterized by want, frustration, human suffering and disgrace. The debate on the relationship between rural area and national development with special reference to poverty in sub Saharan African has gone through a complete circle (Oyeranti & Olayiwola, 2005; Apata, Apata, Igbalajobi, & Awoniyi 2010). Omomona (2010) corroborates this when he states that little wonder why the level of backwardness in the nation in spite of the various endowments natural and human resources. Olowa (2012) sees poverty as an outcome of inefficient use of common resources as a result of a weak policy, environment, inadequate infrastructure, weak access to technology, credit and also by the use of certain mechanisms to exclude a group from participating in the democratic process and economic development. Poverty to him is defined as persistent or permanent socioeconomic deprivations and is linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, endemic socio-political and cultural factors, and gender. Poverty could be transient or structural, transient poverty is more reversible but can become structural if it persists. There has been quite a myriad of attempt in the past, targeted at increasing the standard of living, alleviating poverty and providing infrastructural amenities to the rural populace of our nation. However, a number of these efforts, such as the “One Local Government, One Product” initiative, the rural integrated project, Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Agricultural Development Project and a host of others are either rendered ineffective, inappropriate, and not matching with the cultural setting of most rural areas, in which most have not seen the light of the day.

Despite Nigeria's plentiful agricultural resources and oil wealth, poverty is widespread in the country and has increased since the late 1990s. Some 70 percent of Nigerians live on less than US\$1.25 a day. According to the World Resources Institute's Environmental Resource Portal Earth Trends, about 71 percent of Nigerians live on less than \$2 a day (<http://www.Ifad.wrierpnet/2300538/poverty2010>.accessed04061999). Olowa (2012) went further that poverty is especially severe in rural areas, where up to 80 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and social services and infrastructure are limited. The major source of food and income for the country's poor rural women and men is agriculture. For about 90 % of food production in the country is produced by small-scale farmers who cultivate small plots of land and depend on rainfall rather than irrigation systems.

Osinubi (2003) observed further that it is quite evident that most of the strategies for the implementation of past rural development initiatives have some missing critical ingredients that are necessary to successfully mobilize, empower and involve the rural class in actively participating and contributing to national productivity in a sustainable manner. He went further to maintain that alleviating poverty entails creating a condition to becoming a producer as it enhances direct earnings, the provision of essential services and improvement of basic needs such as medical, housing, education and a regular access to nutritional food. It can be observed that in Nigeria, poverty is particularly severe in the rural areas, where up to 80% inhabitants live below poverty line and social service and infrastructure are inadequate. In spite of Nigeria's abundant agriculture where withal and oil riches, poverty is prevalent in the country and has increased since the late 1990's. Some 70 percent of Nigeria as ascertained by Roberts (2014) live on less than N160 (&1) a day. She alleged further that majority of the rural poor are located in areas resourcefully poor, ecologically vulnerable and with very limited or poor infrastructure. Subsequently, they have no land asset, little or no capital and very limited employment opportunities besides farming and fishing. Sam (2014) perceived rural development to be far-reaching transformation of the social and economic structures , institutions, relationships and processes in any rural areas which encompasses equitable access to arable land , more equitable distribution of income , widespread empowerment in health , nutrition and housing, greatly broadened opportunities for all individuals to realize their full potential through education and strong voice for all rural people in shaping the decision and action that affect their lives.

Kingsley (2010) in the same vein argued that massive poverty undermines the capability of the rural population to mobilize resources for productive activities, limits the process to cope with technological progress. It also reduces the size of potential investors and undermines the zeal for investment. He further stated that a poverty-stricken populace is not in the position to contribute to national growth and development; instead, it tends to undermine it. Since they must consume without necessarily producing, their burden on the surplus generated by the economy becomes too high, as they grow in numbers, thus constraining investment. The report of Asian Development Bank (2007) averred that rural societies live in a simple environment, yet the structure and the dynamics of their day-to-day life is complex. This is so because poverty and underdevelopment are synonymous with rural setting of the developing countries of the world (Nigeria inclusive). Abah (2000) perceived that the deplorable condition of the Nigeria rural sector is emphatic. The rural population constitutes the Nigerian peasantry, the Nigerian poor and the country's largest illiterates groups (Obiukwu,1992).The rural poor are heterogeneous groups which include small-scale farmers, the landless nomads, pastoralist and fishermen and they share common disabilities : limited asset, poverty , malnutrition , environmental vulnerability and lack of access to public services; poor medical facilities ,persistence of local endemic diseases, sometimes without cure which reduces the quality of the labour force, premature death , a dependent, deprived womenfolk, unproductive and subsistence agriculture. (Abah,2000).

Bale (1999), Gop & Williams (2000) in Asian Development Bank Institution(ADB)(2007) viewed rural development to include the provision of social and physical infrastructure, the

provision of financial services in non-urban area; non-farm and small-medium enterprises' activities in rural communities and market towns that are more closely linked to the rural economy than they are to the economies of the larger urban cities, as well as the development of traditional rural sectors, such as agriculture and natural resource management. They or the report noted the key elements that will facilitate the realization of rural development to include social infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and financial services. The dynamics of these three elements they claim will pave way for the upliftment of the living conditions of rural households. Observing events and issues related to such dynamics can facilitate the measurement of the constructs of rural development. Ewuim (2010) evaluated rural development from the point of improvement of socioeconomic and financial sides of the rural dwellers' lives to the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment among the people thereby, giving them a sense of belonging.

Rural poverty in Nigeria is evenly distributed across the country, rather than strong in specific geographic areas. In some areas in the North bordering the Niger, the condition is getting worse which is infertile, marginal to agriculture, environmentally damaged and densely populated (Arhewe, 2014). The fishing communities living in the mangrove swamps and along the Atlantic coast are also part of the poorest in the country. Generally, the demand for labour in rural Nigeria is seasonal and full of reservations; the country's poor rural dwellers depend mostly on agriculture for food and income. About 90 percent of Nigeria's food is produced by small-scale farmers who cultivate small plots of land and depend on rainfall rather than irrigation systems. The dispositions created as a result of these attributes have produced huge disparities in income level between rural and urban areas, unemployment and underemployment resulting in unmitigated poverty for majority of rural Nigerians. Farmers, teachers and government officials with little or no training in relevant skills rely heavily on families in urban areas for support and often take up multiple part-time jobs in all forms of rural enterprises as survival strategy. Finally, vital inputs such as transportation facilities, electricity, water, business premises and information are lacking in rural economies because of inadequate government attention. Effective real demand and markets penetration remain very low due to the poverty that pervades the rural scene (Olawepo, 2002 in Uba, 2012).

Area of Study and Research Method

West Senatorial Zone of the Nasarawa state came into being as a result of the creation of the state in 1996 and the zone comprises five local government areas, which include: Keffi, Karu, Kokona, Nasarawa and Toto respectively (See appendix B). The zone is the closest zone among the three senatorial zones in the state that is closer to the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja thereby making her advantaging positioned to benefit from Abuja; being the Federal Capital Territory and felt the presence of federal government, thereby making rural development programmes naturally trickle down to the zone in particular and Nasarawa State in general. Among the educational institutions in the zone are Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Birmingham University, Auta Balefi in Karu, Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa, School of Health Technology, Keffi, and numerous secondary and primary schools. The zone also has Federal Medical Centre, Keffi and General Hospital in all the five local government areas.

The zone had many ethnic groups but the major ones are Gbagyi, Gwandara, Afo (Apawa), Hausa-Fulani, and Ebira, with minor ethnic groups of Agatu, Yeskwa, Koro, Eggon and Mada respectively. The major cultural activities is the Umaisha fishing festival and the pottery making amongst the Gbagyis in Toto and Karu local government areas respectively. Agriculture is the major occupation of the inhabitants is farming while the major crops grown include: maize, millet, sorghum, yams, cotton, melon, soya beans and Shea-nuts. The zone also has mineral deposit of tin and columbite in Keffi and Nasarawa local government areas respectively. The study is of good relevance to the inhabitants of the zone being farmers and residing in the rural areas and lacking social infrastructures.

The study adopts survey design, using the questionnaire method in the elicitation of data for this study. The sample size for this study was obtained from Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sample determination formula using the formulae on population of 158,678, a sample size of 380 subjects was arrived at. The administered sample size was based on projected population of the rural communities of the study area. These three hundred and eighty (380) respondents were randomly selected from five (5) communities in each of the two selected local government areas (Kokona and Nasarawa) respectively. A total of ten (10) communities were used as sample areas and the population comprises of people within 20 years and above, and residents of the selected communities. The targeted population for the study was rural dwellers who are people between the ages of 20 years and above resident in the ten communities of the two selected local government areas and the sample respondents for the study were selected proportionately from the selected communities and streets from the two local government areas, as shown in table below:

Table 1: Population Distribution of the Study Area and their Sample Size

Senatorial Zone	Five (5) LGAs	2026 Population Census	Population Projected to 2026	Randomly Selected LGAs	Randomly Selected Communities	2026 Population Census	Population Projected to 2026	Sample Size
West Senatorial Zone	Keffi	92,664	95,722	Kokona	Kokona	27,210	28,108	67
	Karu	205,477	212,258	Kokona	Pamboro	16,060	16,590	40
	Kokona	109,749	113,371	Kokona	Dari	11,520	11,900	29
	Nasarawa	189,835	196,100	Kokona	Kurmin-Shinkafa	9,482	9,795	24
	Toto	119,077	123,007	Kokona	Haderi	15,761	16,281	39
				Nasarawa	Laminga	17,953	18,545	44
				Nasarawa	Marmara	4,604	4,756	11
				Nasarawa	Udege-Beki	19,879	20,535	49
				Nasarawa	Marmaraba Udege	10,345	10,686	26
				Nasarawa	Loko	20,796	21,482	51
	Total	716,802	740,458		Total	153,610	158,678	380

Source: NPC (2026) Projected to 2026 (Population Reference Bureau's 2026 World Population Data Sheet, 10 (2026)).

The researcher adopted multi-stage sampling technique. Four stages were involved in the selection of respondents. The selection of one senatorial zone out of the three senatorial zones (which is, West Senatorial Zone) through balloting, then, random selection of two Local Government Areas out of the five Local Government Areas that make up the chosen senatorial zones (Nasarawa and Kokona L.G.As) through balloting by writing the names of the five local governments, wrapped it in a paper and put it in a bowl, then asked one of my research assistant to pick two, of which the above two local government areas were eventually picked. The next stage was the random selection of the selected communities known as wards from each of the two selected local government areas respectively in order to ensure representativeness. And lastly, respondents were selected from the chosen communities. A total of three hundred and eighty (380) respondents were selected from the ten communities in the two local government areas under study.

Results/Discussion of Findings

This section of the paper examines data presentation, analysis and interpretation. This section of the paper is based on the objectives of the study including to examine ways by which development programmes transform rural areas in the study area and to evaluate the development programmes' contribution in reducing poverty in the study area are discussed. In

this paper, a total of four hundred (400) questionnaires were administered and only three hundred and eighty (380) questionnaires were retrieved and used for analysis, because some of the respondents failed to return the questionnaire administered to them, using the simple random sampling technique.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

Age (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 29	107	28.1
30 – 39	126	33.1
40 – 49	75	19.7
50 and above	72	19.1
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 2 above reveals that the age category of 30-39 years dominates the responses (33.1%), followed by 20-29 years with 28.1% meaning that the respondents are of youthful population and within their productive years. This shows that there is the need for rural transformation in the rural areas so as to prevent the majority of the youths that make up the larger population from migrating into the cities.

Table 3: Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	267	70.1
Female	113	29.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 3 indicates that the tradition in rural communities in the study area forbids females attending community meetings except their representatives. As a result, the males (household heads) are more involved in issues related to development in rural development projects. At rural gathering like family meetings, societies and associations, they take account of the rural dwellers' wishes through information sharing. An observation is that most traditional African cultural and religious beliefs that forbid women from such gathering are still being practiced in good number of rural communities. Therefore, as can be seen in the above table, there is a male dominance of 70.1% as a result of gender discrimination because of religion and culture.

Table 4: Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	74	19.4
Married	270	70.9
Divorced	15	4.2
Widowed	21	5.5
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 4 shows that married people dominated the study as they constitute 70.9% of the total respondents since rural dwellers regard marriage as one of the most important and essential social institutions. More so, since their major occupation in the rural areas is farming, they need helping hands in the farm and in the process increase their cultivation.

Table 5: Religion of the Respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	197	52.0
Islam	176	46.2
Tradition	07	1.8
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 5 above reveals that majority of the respondents were Christians, for they constitute 52% of the total respondents while the Muslims respondents in the community's makeup 46.2% of its total population and only 1.8% of the respondents constitute traditional worshippers.

Table 6: Occupational Status of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Farmer	195	51.3
Civil Servant	24	6.3
Businessmen/women	92	24.2
Others	69	18.2
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 6 indicates that majority of the respondents are farmers and that most rural dwellers are engaged in farming activities and that rural areas are more populated than rural areas, for they constitute 51.3% of the respondents in the study area, followed by businessmen/women who are mostly not natives of the studied communities, and others who are mostly women of Islam faith who are in pudah and full time housewives as well as students, and artisans while the civil servants are insignificant in numbers in the study communities.

Section B: Respondents knowledge on the social perception of development programmes and rural transformation in West Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State

This section discussed social perception of development programmes and rural transformation in the study area.

Table 7: Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Educational Status	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	100	26.0
Secondary	59	16.0
Tertiary	26	7.0
No formal education	195	51.0
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 7 shows that rural dwellers suffer high levels of illiteracy with 51% of the respondents made up of those who had tasted any form of formal education (no formal education) at all, which has become a cankerworm affecting the ability of rural people in the study areas and the nation at large to participate in development programmes capable of improving their standard of living and their economies.

Table 8: Duration of Residence of the Respondents

Duration of Residence	Frequency	Percentage
0 – 15years	116	30.4
16 – 30years	107	28.1
31years and above	157	41.5
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The study investigated the duration of residence of the respondents in the communities and showed that majority of the respondents (41.5% & 30.4%) respectively had resided in the communities for 15years and above. It is expected that the longer one stays in a particular community, the better his knowledge of participation in development provision either through government or non-governmental organizations' support, communal effort or partnership. It is believed that these groups act as representatives of various rural organizational setting in the community. These ones are rural dwellers too, who are involved in community projects.

Section B: Respondents knowledge on how development programmes transform rural areas and to evaluate the development programmes' contribution in reducing poverty in West Senatorial Zone of Nasarawa State.

This section examined opinion on how development programmes transform rural areas and to evaluate the development programmes' contribution in reducing poverty in the study area.

Table 9: Provision of Electricity in the Rural Area enhances Rural Transformation

Provision of rural electricity	Frequency	Percentage
Enhance rural transformation	319	84
Not enhance rural transformation	61	16
Total	380	100

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 9 reveals that majority of the respondents (84%) indicate that provision of rural electricity to rural areas enhance rural development, while few of the respondents stated that rural electricity does not enhance rural development. Also, most of the respondents concurred that electrification of rural areas encourages the establishment of appropriate small-scale industries in the rural areas. They maintained that not only ensuring the provision of the electricity in the rural but should also ensure its stable and regular supply to the users in

the rural areas but some others insisted that provision of electricity in the rural areas does not encourage attraction of appropriate small-scale industries because there is no market in the rural areas, in terms of population. So, the maximization of profits in the rural areas is always difficult. In addition, majority of the respondents maintain that rural electrification did encourages the youths residing in the rural areas to be self-employed through the small enterprises such as barbing, hairdressing, viewing centres, ice-block making, batteries and phone charging, just to mention but few Furthermore, respondents in the study area observed that electrical provisions by the governments enhanced industrial investments in the rural areas thereby reducing rural-urban migration and increased in the economic growth of the rural dwellers.

Table 10: Provision of Good Road networks in the rural area Promotes rural Transformation

Provision of good road network	Frequency	Percentage
Promote rural transformation	345	92.2
Not promote rural transformation	29	7.8
Total	374	100

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 10 shows that 92.2% of the respondents indicate that good road networks promote rural transformation. It encourages rural dwellers to easily move their goods from the farm to urban centres for marketing thereby boosting food production. In addition, majority of the respondents shows that provision of good road networks in the rural areas promotes the establishment and development of appropriate small and medium enterprises in the rural area thereby creating employment opportunities for the youths in the rural areas.

Table 11: Provision of health centres /facilities in the rural area enhances more development

Provision of Health Centres /Facilities	Frequency	Percentage
Enhance development	326	86.7
Not enhance development	50	13.3
Total	376	100

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 11 reveals that majority of the respondents indicates that provision of health centres/facilities in the rural areas enhance rural development. They believed it increases standard of living of rural dwellers as well as reduces infant and maternal mortality rates in the rural areas. More so, if infant and maternal mortality is reduced, the rural dwellers will live healthier to engage in productive activities and live longer to pass on these skills to younger generations.

Table 12: Provision of boreholes and pipe borne water in rural area promotes rural transformation

Provision of boreholes and pipe borne water	Frequency	Percentage
Promote rural transformation	313	82.4
Not promote rural transformation	67	17.6
Total	380	100

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 12 indicates that 82.4% of the respondents support the idea that sinking of borehole and provision of pipe borne water in the rural areas promotes rural development because it reduces water related diseases, promotes good hygiene and creates job opportunities for rural dwellers. Also, that with enough and adequate supply of this water, rural famers can go into irrigation farming thereby boosting food production in the economy.

Table 13: Provision of Education in the Rural Area reduces Rural Poverty

Provision of education	Frequency	Percentage
Reduce rural poverty	357	94
Not reduce rural poverty	23	6
Total	380	100

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 13 shows that 94% of the total respondents stated that provision of education reduce rural poverty. They believed that it is the major weapon by which poverty can be reduced to its barest. For, in acquiring education, you are equipped to fight poverty. Also, majority of the respondents indicate that with the availability of education. Ignorance, which is associated with the rural dwellers, can be tackled. More so, the provision of education to the rural dwellers should be made free and if possible, compulsory, so that everybody can have access to it.

Table 14: Provision of Agricultural Facilities Enhances Poverty Reduction in the Rural Area

Provision of agricultural facilities	Frequency	Percentage
Enhance poverty reduction	340	90.2
Not enhance poverty reduction	37	9.8
Total	377	100

Source: Field survey, 2026

Table 14 indicates that 90.2% of the respondents believes that provision of agricultural facilities such as farm seedling, chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers, credit facilities in term of loans and grants without collateral security and interest free enhances the reduction of poverty among rural dwellers and increase food production, which is one of the goals of every responsible government in a country. Also, that government ensures that it is the genuine

farmers who are locals residing in the rural areas and not the bourgeoisies residing in the urban cities that have access to these facilities especially loans and grants, and this can reduce the poverty rates in the rural areas while 9.8% of the respondents stated that provision of these facilities does not enhance the reduction of poverty among rural dwellers. Their argument was that the local farmers do not have access to these loans and grants, but contractors and businessmen who are based in urban centres are accessible to the loans and grants thereby leading to decrease food production and increase in poverty rates in the rural areas.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of this research in the light of the analyzed data, which include the table of frequencies and percentages derived from our field data.

1. The findings revealed the provision of rural electrification and good road networks in the study area enhances and promotes rural development; as can be seen in tables 9 and 10 respectively. This corroborates the works of Olayiwola and Adeleye (2005) that identified and classified good roads and rural electricity as development requirements of the rural areas.
2. The study found that the provision of health centres/facilities in the study area and rural areas in general reduces the increasing rates of infant and maternal mortalities as indicated in table 11, thereby improving the standard of living and life expectancy of the rural dwellers. This is supported in the works of Onah and Okoli (2002) and Osuntogun and Olufokunbi (1986), who asserted that Nigerian areas are characterized by lack of health institutions and where they exist, people travel long distance to get them.

The study further found that the communities of study area lack good source of drinking water and sanitations as analyzed in table 12, which maintains that provision of boreholes and pipe-borne water in the study area promotes rural development. This agrees with the work of Ele (2006) who asserted that inadequate water supply in the rural areas brought about the spread of water borne diseases and poor waste disposals. Findings of the study also revealed that the provision of education enhances the reduction of poverty in the study area as indicated in table 13 of the work. And this is in line with the works of Ijere (1992) to support this finding, when he observed that rural development is increasing the per capita income and the quality of life of the rural dwellers to enable them become prime mover of their own destiny. Ijere (1992) stated that rural areas are characterized by poor standard of living as a result of lack of basic amenities such as roads, water, health care facilities, electricity, education and agricultural facilities for enhanced rural agricultural activities.

Conclusion

The obstacles to rural transformation in Nigeria are poor conditions and a threat to sustainability of both rural resources and rural development. Therefore, the challenge is how to address and at the same time ensure sustainability of development in the rural areas. What is required is the re-evaluation of rural development policies and strategies by the various interest groups and agencies. In all ramifications, development is for the people and therefore must be designed to meet their needs. This means that all rural development efforts must be derived from the felt-needs and aspirations of the rural people and not in response to the needs

of the urban political economy such as unemployment, food shortfalls and rural-urban migration. The present rural development situation poses great problems to all and sundry. Government should show the necessary leadership by matching words with actions through evolving workable rural development approaches, proper co-ordination, funding and technical assistance. The government must create an enabling environment characterized by political stability, and must support fully the participation of the rural poor in programmes that affect their life chances. The people-oriented programmes should be initiated and the rural people should be involved both in the planning and execution of the programme.

The study therefore, concludes that to achieve a sustainable socio-economic development in the study area in particular and Nigeria in general, there is the need to emphatically transform the rural sectors. This can only be achieved by undertaking a conscious and systematic formulation of an integrated rural development programmes. Also, in the study, it was concluded that the problem of rural transformation in the senatorial zone in particular and country in general to a very large extent is not particularly that of policy formulation, rather the problems rest on programme implementation. Consequently, eliminating these problems will assist a rapid rural transformation of the rural sectors with a view to contributing effectively to the overall national development of the country.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations were made:

1. The rural areas should be accorded more recognition in terms of budgetary provisions and provision of social and economic amenities, for over 70% of Nigerian who produce the greatest wealth of the nation reside in the rural areas. This will indeed check the rate of rural-urban migration as well as boost industrial and commercial activities in the rural areas.
2. There is also the need to adequately train the farmers in the use of new technology provided with agricultural facilities such as tractors, fertilizers and pest control chemicals as well as loans at subsidized rates and lower interest rates or interest free that peasants can afford. In this sense, government should endeavour to deal directly with the real farmers in the rural areas and neglect the current practice of absentee farmers living in the urban areas trading in fertilizers meant for real farmers if rural development is to be achieved.
3. It is important and imperative that non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, international organizations and development partners and agencies as well as individuals be encouraged to be deeply involved in the efforts at eradicating poverty, enhancing rural development and the overall national development of the country. In other words, rural development in Nigeria should not be the concern of only Federal, State and Local governments alone.
4. People-oriented programmes should be initiated and the rural people should be involved both in the planning and execution of the programme. Developing the rural communities will go a long way in reducing socioeconomic pressures engendered by rural to urban migration, unemployment and crimes in the burgeoning urban sectors. This means that more opportunities should be given to the rural people for

- participation in decisions that govern their lives.
5. In order to improve the quality of life of the low-income population living in the rural communities on a self-sustaining basis through transforming the sociospatial structure of their productive activities, the need to set up more micro finance banks in such communities becomes imperative. Specifically, rural banking especially through the micro finance outlets provide financial supports through the extension of such facilities like micro credit, loans advances, overdrafts, and investment in rural based industries to rural dwellers, employment of community members and involvement in capacity building within the host communities and direct involvement in rural transformation programmes such as sponsoring and financing communal self-help projects within the rural environment. Hence, the recommendation of the setting up of more community banks in the rural areas to harness and direct local materials and financial resource into durable and sustainable socioeconomic ventures.

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