

Rural Infrastructural Development in Nigeria: Between 1960 and 1990 – Problems and Challenges

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ABSTRACT This paper examines the state of the art with rural infrastructural development in Nigeria between 1960 and 1990. It reviews the various rural infrastructural development programmes of the government over the years. The paper highlighted the achievements of the government rural infrastructural programmes. Finally, the authors discuss the problems and challenges posed by the government responses to the rural infrastructural needs of the people.

INTRODUCTION

The rural areas of Nigeria are inhabited by the bulk of the nation's population; they serve as the base for the production of food and fibre. They are also the major sources of capital formation for the country, and a principal market for domestic manufactures (Olatunbosun, 1975). In general terms, the rural areas engage in primary activities that form the foundation for any economic development.

Yet, despite the importance attached to the rural areas, they are not attractive to live in. There is absence of infrastructure, which improves the quality of life. Usually, there is absence of potable water, electricity and good feeder roads. The rural people have low purchasing power and standard of living.

Attempts at solving the rural problems had been the concern of the governments over the years, e.g. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN); the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) and the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). Some of the DFRRI programmes are being implemented. The contention of the policy makers is that rural infrastructure, if adequately provided, can enhance the quality of rural life. However, it is assumed that the rural people have benefited very little from most rural development programmes. It is against this backdrop that this paper appraises the efficacy of the different approaches to rural infrastructural development in order to suggest a new and more realistic approach.

In the main, a review of the concept of rural

infrastructural development is made. Besides, the government policies on rural infrastructural provision is examined, in order to evaluate the levels of achievement in the various rural infrastructural programmes of the government. Lastly the problems and challenges posed by the government responses to the infrastructural needs of the people are highlighted.

THE CONCEPT OF RURAL INFRASTRUCTURAL PLANNING

Infrastructural facilities, according to Hirschman (1958), refer to those basic services without which primary, secondary and tertiary productive activities cannot function. In its wider sense, infrastructural facilities embrace all public services from law and order through education and public health to transportation, communications and water supply (Mabogunje, 1974; Kahn, 1979). In other words, infrastructural facilities are elements in the package of basic needs, which a community would like to procure for better living. Kahn (1979) asserts that rural infrastructural facilities can be classified into three main types; namely, physical infrastructure – such as roads, water, rural electrification, storage and processing facilities; social infrastructure – namely, health and educational facilities, community centres, fire and security services; institutional infrastructure which include credit and financial institutions, agricultural research facilities and social infrastructure. It is perceived that the adequate provision of these type of infrastructures will enhance the introduction and adoption of innovations offered by institutional infrastructure.

Planners and Geographers alike tend to use rural infrastructural development as a strategy to redress the problems of rural areas. The term 'development' refers to the conscious action by utilizing in a co-coordinated way the resources available to a given political unit (Bernstein, 1978). Accordingly, rural infrastructural development could imply the desirability of overcoming deprivation and low quality of rural life. It could also refer to the provision of bridges, hospitals, schools, electricity and potable water in areas where they are lacking. Rural infrastructural development is a positive action in so far as it aims to improve the welfare of the people.

NIGERIAN RURAL INFRASTRUCTURAL POLICIES OVER THE YEARS

Pre-Independence Period

Government's involvement in infrastructural provision began as far back as 1917 when the colonial government promulgated the Township ordinance. This ordinance classified settlements in the country into three classes: namely, the first, second and third class townships. The first class townships harboured the whites and their workers. There was heavy concentration of infrastructure in these settlements (an example being Lagos). They differ from the second and the third class townships, which received little or no facilities. The situation continued until 1952 when the local government councils were established in Western Nigeria.

The Local Government Councils were seen as avenues through which infrastructural facilities could be extended to the rural areas. But then, the fund allocations to the local governments were hardly enough to maintain facilities in the council headquarters. Infact little or no fund was available to initiate new schemes for rural development. Yet ironically, inspite of the limited benefits of the colonial policies, the investment pattern established during the colonial period was further consolidated by subsequent governments after independence. This is evident in all the development plans initiated since 1960.

Post Independence Plan Period (1960 - Date)

We shall attempt to summarize the post

independence plan period under five major era- The First National Development Plan Period (1962-68); The Second National Development Plan Period (1975-80); The Fourth National Development Plan Period (1980-85); and the Post Fourth Plan Period (1985 to 1990).

The First National Development Plan (1962-68): The First National Plan of Nigeria (1962-68) had a total budget allocation of N1, 353 million (see Table 1). The plan made no clear statement on rural infrastructural development. As agriculture was still an important exchange earner, the plan's objectives were to encourage the assemblage of agricultural produce for export purpose.

The Second National Development Plan (1970-74): The Second plan was launched shortly after the end of the civil war. The plan attempted to rehabilitate economic activities in the war-affected areas.

The plan spelt out five principal national objectives meant to achieve a united, just, strong and self-reliant nation. Some N 2,050.738 million was allocated as expenditure. But just as in the first plan, government did not make any clear statement on rural infrastructural development. However, it was stated in the plan that government was committed to spending N500,000 for village regrouping. This was perhaps to reduce the cost of providing economic and social infrastructure such as health, electricity, water and educational facilities for the rural areas.

The sum allocated to rural development looks too paltry, and, generally like the previous ones, the plan failed to introduce any radical package towards rural infrastructural development.

The Third National Development Plan (1975-80): Serious concern for rural development at the national level was first highlight in the third national development plan. The objectives of the plan are similar to those of the second national development plan. The plan emphasized the need to reduce regional disparities in order to foster national unity through the adoption of integrated rural development.

The total budget allocation in the third national development plan was N32 billion (see Table 1). The plan provided for:

- the allocation of N90 million towards nation wide rural electrification scheme;
- the establishment of nine River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) in

Table 1: Summary of the post-independence national development plans total capital expenditure (₦Million)

<i>Plans</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Total expenditure</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
First National Development	1962-68	1,353,00	3.7
Second National Development	1970-74	2,050,738	5.7
Third National Development	1975-80	32,854.616	90.6
Fourth National Development	1981-85		
Post Fourth National Development	1985-1990		

addition to the two existing ones (Sokoto and Rima (RBDAs);

- the construction of small dams and boreholes for rural water supply and the clearing of feeder roads for the evacuation of agricultural produce and
- the supply of electricity to rural areas from large irrigation Dams.

At the State Level, some governments, like Oyo State, showed their intention to transform the rural areas through the provision of basic infrastructural facilities. The Oyo State Government spent N15.98 million for the execution of rural electrification for some rural settlements. In addition, the state government planned for the construction of 150 rural health centres and 725 health clinics all over the state. The health facilities were to be provided at a cost of N31.719 million.

The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-85): The Fourth National Development Plan exhibits several distinguishing features. First, it was formulated by a civilian government under a new constitution based on the presidential system of government. Second, it was the first plan in which the local government tier was allowed to participate fully in its own right. (Fourth National Development Plan, 1981).

The plan emphasized among other things the need for balanced development of the different sectors of the economy and of the various geographic areas of the country. It emphasized the importance of rural infrastructural development as a vehicle for enhancing the quality of rural life. Consequently, about N924 million was allocated to the eleven River Basin Development Authorities whose functions include among other things, the construction of boreholes, dams, feeder roads and jetties. About 12, 064 kilometers of feeder roads, 2,650 boreholes, 2,280 wells, 29 farm service centres and 249 earth dams, were expected to be constructed by the River Basin Development Authorities.

The Federal Government allocated N645

million for a country- wide electrification, in addition, all; the states of the federation allocated N700.4 million for the electrification of about 1,600 towns and villages.

In terms of rural transportation development, the local government in the country planned for the provision of inter city/village bus services, for the construction of motor parks, and for petrol filling stations during the forth plan period (1981-85).

In order to increase the access of rural dwellers to safe drinking water, rural water supply schemes were planned apart from the huge boreholes drilling programme. The total allocation for this sector was N2, 805 million. Local Governments in some states such as Anambra, Plateau, Cross-River States, Bendel and Borno States also made fund allocation totalling N311,824 million for water projects.

At the state level, the various state governments spelt out different policy issues in the forth development plan. For instance, in Oyo State, the government identified four cardinal programmes for itself. These include-

- (a) Free education at all levels
- (b) Free medical services
- (c) Integrated rural development and
- (d) Gainful employment

In line with the above programmes, the sum of N1, 642,401 million were allocated to the various sectors of the economy. The rural sector received much attention in the attempt to

- Upgrade some local government roads.
- Establish 27 Primary Health Centres, 105 health clinics and 6 comprehensive health centres. All these were to be located mostly in the rural areas.
- Provide wells in rural areas where piped water is not available.
- Extend rural electrification scheme to phase five in addition to the existing phases one to four, which are still under construction.

The Post Fourth Plan Period (1985 to Date): The post fourth plan period witnessed the establishment of the Directorate for Food, Roads

and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1985 for the purpose of providing rural infrastructure in the country side. The laws establishing the Directorate was promulgated under Decree number four of 1987. The core of the Directorate's programme is the promotion of productive activities. Besides, the directorate recognized the provision of rural infrastructure such as feeder roads, water, electricity and housing as essential for the enhancement of the quality of life in the rural areas.

The programme of the directorate includes:

- the organization and mobilization of the local people to enhance or facilitate closer interaction between the government and the people. In addition the local communities were asked to form unions or associations for the purpose of providing common facilities for themselves;
- the provision of rural infrastructures such as rural feeder roads, rural water and sanitation, rural housing and electrification;
- the promotion of productive activities such as food and agriculture, rural industrialization and technology;
- the promotion of other extra curricular activities such as socio-cultural and recreational programmes, intra and inter community cohesion activities.

The plan for the implementation of DFRRI programmes was organised into two phases. In phase one, the target was to provide water for 250 communities in each of the states of the federation, to construct 90,000km of feeder roads, and to promote rural housing, health and agriculture. To facilitate industrial growth, and improve the attractiveness of the rural environment, the Directorate planned to commence its rural electrification programme in the second phase starting in June 1987.

In pursuit of its objectives, DFRRI also planned to co-operate with organizations like Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute (NBRRI) as well as rural water supply and sanitation programme (RWATSAN). The Directorate of food, roads and rural infrastructures (DFRRI), does not get involved in direct implementation of the programmes. Rather, for the purpose of the programme implementation, the directorate uses as its main agents, the states and the local governments, to execute its programme. The funds for the programme of the Directorate are made available directly to each state government who then sees to the disbursement of such fund to the local govern-

ments. The local governments in the federation are constituted into rural development committees. These committees embrace the local government officials and the rural communities.

Overall, about N433 million was allocated to the Directorate in 1986 for the purpose of implementing its programme. But only N300 million was actually disbursed. In 1987 and 1988, N500 million and N1 billion respectively were allocated to the Directorate.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT RURAL INFRASTRUCTURAL PROGRAMMES

As mentioned earlier, there was little effort made on rural infrastructural development during the pre-independence era and in fact up to the time of the second National Development Plan period.

Safe for the N500,000 that was committed to village regrouping during the second National Development Plan period, rural infrastructural development and indeed rural development was low in the priority list of the government in the first and second plans.

Similarly not much was achieved during the third plan period especially with regards to rural infrastructural provision. At the Federal Level, for instance, table 2 reveals the persistent inequalities in access to portable or piped water supply between the urban and rural areas of the country at that time. At the state level, not much was achieved in rural infrastructural provision especially in Oyo State. For example in Oramiyan Local Government Council area, nine settlements were scheduled to benefit from the rural electrification scheme of the Oyo State Third Development plan. The settlements include Phase 1 – Ifetedo, Phase 2- Yekemi, Omifunfun, Mefoworade; Phase 3 – Kajola, Ogudu, Famia, Oyere- Aborishade, Aye-Oba and Olode/ Aiyeye. Up till 1989, precisely fourteen years after the launching of the third.

National Development Plan, the third phase of this rural electrification project is yet to be completed. In fact the first and second phases of the electrification project have been completed and in some cases just commissioned.

During the fourth plan period (1981-85) the lack of funds and commitment limited the extent of infrastructural provision in the rural areas. However, the river basin development authorities were successful in constructing a total of 11, 246kms of feeder roads, 1,319 boreholes, 29 wells and 130 dams through out the federation.

Table 2: Coverage of water supply in fifteen states in 1978

<i>States</i>	<i>Area in km (000)</i>	<i>Total population (m)</i>	<i>No. of centres (Urban)</i>	<i>Urban % served</i>	<i>Rural % served (a)</i>	<i>Rural % Served (b)</i>	<i>Pop served by piped water (m)</i>
Anambra	17	5.69	32	37	64	9	1
Borno	117	4.53	18	70	0	-	0.5
Benue	43	3.53	8	80	88	-	0.2
Cross River	28	5.08	19	85	8	5	1.1
Gongola	100	3.5	17	31	2	-	0.2
Imo	12	5	9	100	20	1	0.7
Kaduna	70	6.4	22	31	13	4	0.7
Kano	43	8.36	20	-	-	-	-
Kwara	154	2.7	21	85	13	2	0.8
Lagos	34	4.53	4	94	4	-	2.2
Oyo	22	7.6	24	79	-	-	6
Ogun	16	2.6	10	100	14	10	0.8
Plateau	53	3.19	19	83	0	-	0.6
Rivers	28	2.02	13	66	35	1	0.3
Sokoto	64	6.55	16	100	39	-	0.9
Total		68.13	239	68	18	2	16

Source: Federal Republic of Nigeria, Fourth National Development Plan (1981- 85) Vol. 1, Lagos: National Planning Office, 1981, Pg. 325.

Note: (a) Rural Population served by all types of water supply including shallow Wells. (b) Rural population served by urban water supply

Details of these statistics are shown in table 3.

The post fourth plan period (1985 - 1990) witnessed some improvements in the provision of rural infrastructure. Within the few years of DFRRRI's existence, some notable achievements have been made. For instance between 1986 and 1988, about 30,000kms or rural roads were claimed to have been constructed. Although, it could be argued that the length of roads constructed were just 50% short of the government's target of 60,000 kilometres for 1986, yet the directorate opened up the rural areas within a short period of time. The Directorate made rural road development as their first priority because of the belief that unless there is access to the rural communities, all other infrastructures such as electricity, water and farm inputs cannot reach the rural people.

Problems and Challenges of Rural Infrastructural Provision

The provision of rural infrastructure has for

long been seen as a government concern and the federal, state and local governments have tried in different ways to tackle the rural infrastructural problems.

The synthesis of government activities reveals that during the past few years, series of constructive programmes and far reaching actions were taken by the government to combat rural infrastructural problems, which are far from being solved, and this can be attributed to flaws in the strategies adopted by the government. Such flaws include:

First, the use of only the development plans as an instrument for programming resource allocations for different sectors of the economy. The development plans have focused "objective indices" with regards to rural infrastructural provision. The government planners failed to realize that whatever the scope and priorities of the development plans, they could not but have different results for different areas particularly with regards to the needs and wants of the

Table 3: Rural infrastructures constructed under the operation of integrated rural development in Nigeria (1980-83)

<i>Type of Infrastructures</i>	<i>Year</i>				<i>Total</i>	<i>1986</i>
	<i>1980</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1983</i>		
Feeder roads (in Km)	2,360	3,150	4,112	1,624	11,246	19,425.30
Boreholes	233	8	360	718	1,319	-
Wells	9	20	-	-	27	-
Dams	66	10	33	21	130	-

different communities. Indeed several rural communities in Nigeria differ in the nature and degree of their needs (Okafor, 1985). Every community may not need the same thing. It is therefore necessary for the government to be sensitive to the different ecological situations and seek to develop the communities along a direction the rural people can well appreciate.

Second, is the lack of perceptual focus in the development plans. The villages by their nature lack the fund, power and political will to decide on the type and quantity of their infrastructural needs. While the activities of DFRRRI are positive in the provision of rural infrastructure facilities, a perceptual study of infrastructural facilities in rural areas of Nigeria is needed so as to provide a clearer view of the infrastructural needs of the rural people.

Third, other means of encouraging rural infrastructural provision were not given adequate attention. For example the shortage of fund for the implementation of rural infrastructural plan is ill conceived at the time it is implemented.

Fourth, the government rural infrastructural programmes were embarked upon without effective programme of action and appropriate institutional arrangements for their execution. For instance, the government established the directorate of foods, roads, and rural infrastructure at the Federal Level and only uses the states and the local governments for the disbursements of funds for the implementation of its programmes. Usually, it is difficult to separate the local governments' rural programmes from the DFRRRI programmes. In some cases there is duplication of programmes between the different tiers of government.

Fifth, the lack of spatial focus in rural development planning has handicapped the rural infrastructural programmes. Usually most villages in the country are scattered. This raises the problem of threshold population for sustaining the infrastructural provision. For instance, villages where infrastructures like schools and hospitals have been provided before have witnessed the closure of these facilities due to lack of threshold population. This lapse could be corrected through the addition of a regional planning approach. The village-regrouping concept is an example of a regional development approach that could be employed to effect the provision and distribution of infrastructures.

One important lesson we might get from the

past experiences is that the Federal Government should not limit the establishment of DFRRRI to the Federal Level alone. Studies have shown that rural development agencies are better established at the local level, which is very close to the grass root people. We should learn from the Tanzanian experience where rural development agencies operate well at the local level. The government should extend the establishment of DFRRRI to the Local government level. Indeed village or community infrastructural development and maintenance board should be organized to mobilize and inculcate in the mind of the people, the sense of purpose necessary for infrastructural development and maintenance.

Another lesson is that government should encourage the adoption of community development strategy. This has been successfully done in Tanzania. This will go a long way to complement the efforts of the government agencies.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted a discussion of the problems and challenges posed by the various rural infrastructural development programmes in Nigeria. It highlighted the concept of rural infrastructural planning and examined the Nigerian rural infrastructural policies over the years. The problems and challenges posed by the various rural infrastructural development programmes were highlighted.

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