

INTEGRATING RURAL COMMUNITIES FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (1- 3) IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The term Sustainable Development is fast becoming a household term in the globe. The seventeen [17] Sustainable Development Goals were formed out of vision 2030 development agenda, presented by the United Nation as a development framework for members nations. This paper therefore examines the achievement of the first three Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria via Rural integration approach. The concepts of Rural integration, and its importance to development and the achievement of the nation's Sustainable Development Goals were highlighted. The analysis of the concept of integrated Rural development was handled in a manner to enhance the understanding of the concept and its potency in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals of the nation. The features and conditions of our Rural communities were also highlighted. Some suggestion as a forward were proffered. The paper concludes that with the integration of our Rural communities, the first three Sustainable Development Goals, which directly reflects on the rural people will be achieved.*

KEYWORDS: Development Goal, Integration, Sustainable, Rural Community

INTRODUCTION

The Millennium summit of September 2000 which resulted to the adoption UN Millennium Declaration, posed a number of challenges. Following this challenges, the Millennium Development Goals were adopted by 189 member countries of the United Nations. A set of eight goals were targeted to be achieved within fifteen years (2000-2015). Among these goals were to address extreme poverty, hunger, etc. As a follow up, in September 2015 the UN Sustainable Development Summit come out with agenda 2030, having 17 sustainable goals and 169 targets.

The sustainable development goals are long terms development plans given to UN member nations covering a period of 15years. It forms a development frame work which can be addressed through policy and re-structuring of plans and programmes to meet each specific goal. Plan in this context will involve articulating all possible alternatives. In Nigeria, the implementation is designed to be carried out in three phases.

Phase 1; 2016 - 2020

Phase 2; 2020 -2026

Phase 3; 2026 -2030

Sustainable Development Goals 1- 3 and targets at a glance.

Bellow are Sustainable Development Goals 1-3 as contained in the policy white paper;

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

SDGs targets are as follows;

Goal 1.

- i) Eradication of extreme poverty for all everywhere, currently living on less than \$1.25 a day.
- ii) Reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
- iii) Implementation of appropriate social protection system and measures for the poor and vulnerable.
- iv) Ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal right to economic resources, as well as access to basic services.
- v) Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shock and disasters.

Goal 2 .

- i) End hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe nutritious and sufficient food all year round.
- ii) End all forms of malnutrition, including children under 5 years of age, and address nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and old persons.
- iii) Double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous people, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, through secure and equal access to land other productive inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.
- iv) Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and progressively improve land and soil quality.
- v) Maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animal and their related wild species.

Goal 3.

- i)** Reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.
- ii)** End preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under 5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.
- iii)** End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.
- iv)** Reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.
- v)** Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.
- vi)** Halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.
- vii)** Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.
- viii)** Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.
- ix)** Substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.

To bring about the achievement of these plans, requires the involvement of all sectors and stake holders in development. This is why the integration of rural people or communities becomes necessary. The inclusion of rural communities in the development plan, with concrete and specific policies and mode of transmission of these plans will mark a mile stone achievement in the vision 2030 agenda in the nation. Research has shown that greater number of the nation's population resides in rural areas. These rural people are poor, hungry, and without health assurance, hence their life expectancy remains very low. This paper is of the view that, a focus on the rural people will enhance the achievement of SDGs.

Rural communities account for more than half of a country's population. If there must be a significant achievement in any programme in a nation, the rural communities must of necessity be carried along. Nigeria is not isolated in this, if the nation will end poverty in all its forms, hunger, achieve food, security and improve nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture and ensure healthy living for all ages, in pursuance of sustainable development goals, then, the integration of her rural communities becomes imperative.

A critical analysis of the 17 sustainable development goals, reveal that all have direct bearing or relevance to the rural people. This invariably means that addressing these goals from the perspectives of the rural communities, will result to significant achievement.

This approach will differ from the previous because, though there had been efforts by government at all levels to address the problem of poverty, hunger and health, most of the

programmes are usually high jacked by those in the urban centres and those who do not even need the programmes, with little or no impact on the people for which the programmes are targeted at. This paper advocates for clear identification of the poor, mainly located at the rural communities and direct the programmes at them, via its agencies. Knowing the identity and status of all Nigerians will mark the beginning of a meaningful fight against poverty in the country. With the existence of the three tiers of government (federal, state and local) and proper monitoring of programme and efforts in this direction, Nigeria will achieve the three sustainable development goals which addresses the needs of the rural people before expiration of vision 2030.

Features of Rural Communities.

Over the years, governments, researchers and community members had been battling with the dilemma of how to identify what makes a community rural or otherwise. To some a rural place or community is a place without the good things of life. Following the inconclusive yard stick for identifying rural communities, Ekong (2010) proffered some differentiating features of a rural community;

- i) **The rural communities maintain constant touch with nature:** The people of rural area keep close contact with natural environment. All their activities revolve around land, forest and sea in their natural state.
- ii) **Occupation:** since they are close to the environment, their main occupations are farming fishing and animal husbandry. Only a few are engaged in crafts and petty trading.
- iii) **Size of the area:** It is a general notion that the size of the rural communities are usually small. Smallness here refers to the actual occupied land mark, but the area called rural is usually large since the people are predominantly farmers, and large expands of land are requires for this purpose.
- iv) **Population:** Population density in a rural area is usually low. To identify a rural area or community one could use this parameter. Population density mean the number of persons per unit or area of land.

In metro cities a large number of persons are usually found on a unit of land evident with high rise buildings.

- v) **Simplicity of culture:** The rural areas have simple culture which is shared in form of belief system, ideas, norms and values.
- vi) **Homogeneity:** In rural area, the people are the same in almost every thing. One community is like the other, all rural areas look alike. They have the same composition.
- vii) **Social interaction:** In rural communities, interaction emerges from a strong sense of community togetherness. Each person behaves towards others in ways that encourages further interaction in the future.
- viii) **Social solidarity:** There is strong unity among members of rural areas. They usually exhibit the spirit of togetherness dues to their similarities and tendency toward general agreement, common experiences, purpose, custom and tradition.

- ix) **Social mobility:** In rural areas, mobility is very rigid. Occupation and social life are based on heredity and often difficult to shift from one to another.
- x) **Social control:** Behaviour of individuals are controlled by the family, based on social norms and values. They are also known for joint family system. Gossips, sanctions and ostracism are means of effective control of behaviour in rural areas.
- xi) **Social stratification:** In a typical rural setting or community there are few social classes. It is usually difficult to differentiate between the rich and the poor in rural communities. Classification is based on tradition and hereditary.
- xii) **Standard of living:** In Nigeria like in other countries of the world, standard of living of rural people are usually very low. Poverty deprivation and lack of social amenities are very predominant in this areas.

Concept of poverty, hunger and health.

The issue of poverty has become a global phenomenon, been experienced by both the developed and developing nations of the world. This is evidence in the fact that the phenomenon has topped the agenda of the UN member nations' summit in the past twenty years. The concept of poverty is complex, so can not be pinned to any sphere of life. According to World Bank (2013) poverty may be categorized in different ways, either as income, consumption or material poverty. United Nations (2001) defined poverty as a sinability to access resources in order to maintain a minimal or acceptable standard of living.

According to World Summit (2005), poverty indicator or manifestation should include the following:

- a) Lack of income and productive resources sufficient to sustain livelihoods.
- b) Hunger and malnutrition.
- c) Lack of access to quality health care.
- d) Inadequate or lack of access to good education and other basic needs.
- e) Inadequate housing and lack of shelter etc.

UNESCO (2016) further describes extreme poverty as a situation in which an individual can not maintain his basic needs (ie) there is inadequacy in terms of availability of social needs such as food, clothes and shelter.

The UNDP Human Poverty Index (HPI) identified life expectancy, literacy, access to safe water and child malnutrition as the criteria for defining the proportion of population who are poor. They also developed a new method for determining the poverty line using utility theory as proposed by Nanak Kakwani. To him, poverty level should depend on the availability of work and the wage rate. If an individual can not earn enough to be able to eat so as to prevent deterioration in health, and, in general, labour power, then he or she is poor

Hunger: In the views of Anderson 1990 hunger is a potential, although not necessary, consequence of food insecurity. Holben (2005) postulated some definitions of hunger from various sources, (1) a motivational drive, need, or craving for food; (2) an uneasy sensation

felt when one has not eaten for some time; (3) discomfort, illness, weakness, or pain caused by a prolonged, involuntary lack of food; and (4) the prolonged, involuntary lack of food itself. Of the all the definitions, the third provides a starting point for consideration as to what is intended for the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM). It refers to the *consequence* of food insecurity that, because of a prolonged, involuntary lack of food due to lack of economic resources, results in discomfort, illness, weakness, or pain that goes beyond the usual uneasy sensation.

Health: According to Taylor (2008) the concepts of human health have broad meanings and People have different thoughts and different connotation for it. Some believe health as a state of being free from any disease. To some, health means having balance and stability in their lifestyle. Very many others see it as the capability in carrying out their responsibilities and also to remain fit and healthy . According to World Health Organisation (WHO, 1974) health is defined as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Taylor argues that people living in rural area associate health and wellbeing as more productive, experienced better health care and able to get health services . He believes that health is a wealth that an individual earn in life. Without the sound health it is hard to perform life sustaining activities like job, physical activities etc.

Concept of Rural Integration

Integration is the process of making something to be in whole or entity, the process of fitting into a community or society. Community integration seeks to ensure full participation of all people in community life such as school, careers, homes, relationships, leisure and other life styles in the community.

There are two forms of integration. The physical and social integrations

Physical Integration: According to Gustausson (1990), physical integration best describes the common uses of the term integration while **social integration** has to do with struggle for equality and quality of life. Social integration” has different meanings to different people. For some, social integration was a positive process about encouraging harmonious interactions between diverse communities in society, and providing equal rights and opportunities for everyone.

In the Western world, integration is often associated with unification or engrafting of those with one form of disability or the other. Integration into the community is the greatest expectation and desire of rehabilitation workers and centres, for victim or people with disabilities in life. In this context, the rural people are seen to be disabled and needs rehabilitation. Community Integration offers opportunity to live in the community and be valued for one's uniqueness and abilities, like everyone else. Community Integration provides a road map to recovery by creating an environment that facilitates individual well-being.

It advocates that all people, regardless of abilities, should have access to, choice of, and an opportunity to participate in a full range of community activities, though individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) have limited cognitive capacities and adaptive behaviours for participating in activities of daily living (National Institutes of Health, 2010). Community integration for individuals with ID should occur across the lifespan, from infancy throughout the aging process. The community roles and activities will vary depending on the stage of the individual's life and his or her interests. For example, integrating a child or youth into the community may focus on home, school, and recreational activities; whereas integrating an

adult into the community may focus on home management, employment, leisure, religious, or social activities.

Just as computer integration brings together smaller components into a single system to function as one, so community integration, by unifying all communities, be it Urban or Rural, to form a block for the achievement of the expected Sustainable Development Goals. The integrated approach adopted in this paper is appropriate because the first three Sustainable Development Goal (Poverty, Hunger and Health) fall within the basic needs of Abraham Maslow's need hierarchy, and their joint articulation will facilitate achievement.

Concept and Condition of Rural Communities

Rural concept is multidimensional, the scope of which has posed great confusion to researcher and those concern in the use of the concept. Very many researchers had attempted a unification of the concept, but there still seem not to have been a common ground for all the schools of thought. Some times, population density yard stick is applied, while geographic dimension is used by so many other state holders.

The word "rural" connotes a place with natural features and the main concern of the people is agriculture. In the view of Olisa and Obiukwa (1992) population is the main characteristics that differentiates rural from urban areas, especially in developing countries.

In Nigeria, a place with population of 20,000 and bellow is regarded as a rural place. A different definition of rural community based on a much smaller geographic yardstick was provided by the US Census. In its urban-rural classification system, the term rural is used when referring to non metro area. Census Bureau offers an official statistical definition of rural based on population size and density.

In its report based on 2010 census, released in 2012 portrays rural areas as comprising open country and settlement with fewer than 2,500 residents. Small population size usually characterize rural place, but population threshold used to differentiate rural and urban communities rage from 2, 500 to 50,000.

However, this is not enough to explain a rural area. Olisa and Obiukwa in Enyi (2014) maintains that

The main features of rural area are depression, degradation and deprivation. Many rural villages are immersed in poverty so palpable that the people are the embodiment of it. In most rural area in Nigeria basic infrastructure where they exist at all are too inadequate for meaningful development.

From the fore going, in developing countries such as Nigeria, rural communities lack basic amenities that make life good and meaningful. Such amenities as road, water, electricity, health care etc, the reverse of this situation or condition will result to a rise in the standard of living of the people and in turn the nation.

Since the first three sustainable development goals are directly related to the above, the improvement of these conditions will lead to the achievement of the goals.

Studies had shown that the rural areas or communities are key sector in every nation's economy, and their development need to be the priority of any good policy or government all

over the world. This is occasioned by the fact that the greater population of every nation is found in the rural areas or communities.

The rural sector of Nigeria plays vital role in the socio-economic development of the nation. This is why its integration to the plans and policies of the government will not only lead to the achievement of the first three sustainable development goods, but will reposition the nations economy.

The above is the position of Nyagba (2009) who maintain that the important sector of the Nigerian population is the rural area. In the views of Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemaka (2013) the rural sector is the major source of capital formation for the country and a principal market for domestic and raw materials for industrial process. This accounts for the reason for advocacy for the integration of rural communities into what ever plan, policy and action of the federal and state governments to end poverty, and hunger and achieve food security, improve nutrition and ensure healthy lives and promotion of well-being of all residence must be central in the minds of all and sundry.

Not minding the condition or state of affairs of the residents of the rural communities, they still contribute to the economy, by implication, if there living condition is improved, not only will it result to the achievement of the sustainable goals but will cumulate to the overall national growth of the nation.

This is pictured in the concept of integrated rural development by United Nation Cited in Enyi (2014) thus;

The concept of integrated rural development implies that it is a composite or comprehensive programme for rural people in which all relevant sectors such as agriculture, education; housing, health and employment are conceived as interlinking element in a system having horizontal as well as vertical linkage in operational and spatial term.

A critical analysis of this concept reveals its direct relationship with the element of the first three sustainable development goals (poverty, hunger/agriculture and health). The pursuit of these elements through the integrated approach, where the government and its agencies through programmes and policies, take concerted actions aimed at improving the quality of life of the rural people is inevitable.

The actualization of this concept will result in self-sustaining improvement of rural people and will involve the re-organisation, re-orientation and mobilization of the rural sector to emancipate them from the depression, derogation and deprivation which characterizes their existence thus increasing their capacity and ability for a sustained livelihood and contribution to national economy. To achieve this the government need to put in place basic skills and capacity building programmes such as: Automobile machines, electrical, catering, web design, graphic design, agro skills, hair making, shoe making, events management etc. All these skills had been proven as means of overcoming unemployment and poverty. In recent time, the Federal government seems to be making efforts in this direction, but one wonders, if the effort will be sustained to create the much needed impact on the rural poor.

Poverty, low per capital income, inequitable distribution of home, low capital formation, inefficiency in the mobilization of resources, education, health, infrastructure etc are chronic social issues in Nigeria.

Effect of Rural Integration

The provision of skills for the less privileged (rural poor) and empowering them with soft loans will promote small and medium scale enterprises which is capable of ending poverty in the nation. As pointed out earlier, Nigeria alongside with other nations of the world had made efforts to end poverty during Millennium Development Goals, in the nation, but no significant results were achieved. Now that we are talking about Sustainable Development Goals, issues of poverty still top the agenda. The question is why. To answer the “why” question is the reason for this paper. A number reasons accounts why the problem of poverty, hunger and health had persisted, despite these efforts.

- 1) **Poverty mentality:** A greater percentage of Nigerians feel and see themselves as been poor. Once a person is not able to live or meet up the life of his dream, he sees himself or herself as been poor. The yardstick for poverty is one US dollar per day. So any person or persons living below this is regarded internationally to be poor. So many Nigerians who are ten times better, because of greed and ostentatious life , still key themselves into the programmes designed for the poor, thereby swelling poverty figure and even prevent the people that really need the programme from getting it. Indeed, status documentation is very necessary, if this fight against poverty in the nation will be meaningful.
- 2) **Political Influence:** Another reason why poverty eradication programmes in the country do not make significant impact, is because of the attachment of politics to such programmes . The practice in the nation is such that, the government in power uses poverty eradication programmes to compensate their loyalists(members). Think of what happens if a government in power sees a community or communities as not loyal to it, members of that community will remain the way they are till thy kingdom come.
- 3) **Span of control:** The scalar chain of command and the wide gap between the power brokers of the very empowerment programme and the rural poor are usually so much that it affects the benefit of the programme. The gap should be bridged and this could be done through integration of the communities making them part of the planning and execution of the programmes.
- 4) **Preferential crop production:** despite the efforts made by the government for the achievement of food security, it had still remained an expectation because of the nations agricultural policies. The first is the policy of producing cash crops for export, neglecting the masses demand for food but rather resort to importation. This policy tends to cripple rural or peasant farmers who are the major producers of the nation’s food demand.

Another policy of the nation which negates the rural farmers as observed by (Nnadozie 198), is the incentives for large scale agriculture, which in most cases are not for rural people. In spite of the importance of the potentials of rural sector in the form of its workforce , the policies of the government do not favour it . For example, the agricultural credit grantee scheme under which the commercial banks are to give peasant farmers loan for agriculture, back up by the Federal government, through the central bank. This scheme was designed to encourage the rural farmers , but in actuality, it is only the big farmers that are able to meet the condition layed down by the banks. The rural farmers which are normally in large number are denied the access to the credit facility. Integration in this sense would be very useful, as it will bring the rural community farmers closer to the government and ensure direct interaction. Researchers and agricultural extension officers

will be more closer to the farmers and their impact will be more felt. The integration plan should incorporate the establishment of Agricultural Revamp centres in each local government. Along side, agricultural banks could be brought closer to the people for easy disbursement of loan and proper monitoring.

- 5) **Environmental hazards:** Attempts are made by many states and even the Federal government to ensure good health among all the people in the nation but more still need to be done, because of the prevailing health challenges in the nation. Though, the provision of hospitals and free medical scheme, of some states are commendable, programmes and policies should be directed towards making the environment safe for habitation and there will almost be no need for health centres or hospitals. To achieve any of these sustainable development goals, proactive measures are required and this is one of the aspects of the integrated approach.

Way Forward

Following the facts portrayed in this paper, the following measures are proffered as a way forward for the achievement of the first three sustainable development goals in the nation.

- 1) proper identity of all citizens of the nation and their status to avoid cross carpeting should their be programme for eradication of property.
- 2) Government and its agencies should interface with persons or target groups of any programme to ascertain its the level of success.
- 3) There should be monitoring mechanism to ensure programmes effectively carried out.
- 4) Agricultural policies and programmes should be directed towards striking a balance between domestic food production and export goods.
- 5) The rural develops should be incorporated into programmes of skill acquisition and soft loans made available enable them set up small and medium size enterprises.
- 6) Agricultural extension offers should be developed to rural areas to have direct integration with the rural farmers.
- 7) Agricultural development centres should be located in every local government areas at the nation.
- 8) Agricultural banks loan should be made easy to rural farmers by eliminating all the bottle necks associated with banking regulations.
- 9) Rural commodities and rural people should be oriented to prevent sicknesses as against its cure, through improved hygiene and environmental.
- 10) More federal presence should be felt at the rural areas in terms of health care provision.

CONCLUSION

Poverty has a damming consequence on the poor. Like leprosy, poverty is contentious, its victim only tell the tales of woe, hunger, depression, which leads them to some social vices that up turns the country and social at large. Programmes of poverty alleviation should be vigorously pursued and achieved to save the nation from total collapse. It is hoped that if all the suggestions projected in this paper are strictly followed, the nation can get to the promise land of the achievement of theses sustainable development goals.

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