

THE IMPACT OF ROADS ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KATSINA-ALA, LOGO AND UKUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF BENUE STATE-NIGERIA

Venatus V. Kakwagh

Department of sociology, Kogi State University, Anyigba- Nigeria

ABSTRACT: *The main focus of this study is to assess the impact of roads on rural development in Katsina-Ala, Logo and Ukum local government areas of Benue state. The study has shown that rural roads play crucial role in socio-economic development of rural areas. It has particularly shown that rural roads enhance accessibility to markets and accessibility of population through cheap transport costs. Roads also create link between rural and urban areas thereby creating attractive prices for producers, lower losses of produce, and lower prices for consumers. It has therefore recommended that both the federal, state and local governments should make the construction and rehabilitation of rural roads a priority in their developmental agenda. Construction of roads and the rehabilitation of existing ones will reduce the cost of transporting goods and passengers. Local governments should be empowered to open up new roads to facilitate the transportation of goods to the markets at reduced costs. The provision of rural roads will improve the income of the rural dwellers. The provision of roads to link rural areas with urban centres will reduce the rate of post-harvest losses.*

KEYWORDS: Assessment; Impact; Roads; Rural; Development

INTRODUCTION

The social and economic development of rural areas is driven by many factors. One of such crucial factors is the access of the people living in the rural areas to transport and services (World Bank, 2016). Relying on the position of the World Bank, many international organizations like the British Department for International Development (DFID, 2008) and scholars like Dongos, C; Edmonds, G and Johannesson, B (2007); Buys, P. Deichmann, U and Wheeler, D (2006) have emphasized the importance of roads to agricultural and rural development. Similarly, Ayinde ((2012) has opined that a critical key to agricultural and rural development is the ability of a nation to overcome infrastructural constraints especially that of rural roads.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, rural roads are unique because of their capacity to pave way for other investments such as, schools, health care and security. In Africa generally, rural roads, besides allowing the movement of people, serve as key determinants of poverty reduction in rural areas. In fact, easy or difficult movement determines how people can move their products and access information. It is when places are accessible that services can be moved to the consumers. To make services accessible therefore means making people mobile through roads (Tighe, 2006). Without good roads, a community's ability to take advantage of surplus crop production and employment opportunities is greatly reduced.

Generally, rural roads serve as poverty alleviation instruments (World Bank, 2016). They are also essential to raising the standard of living in rural areas. In other words, roads bring about a reduction in transport costs, generate market activity and foster economic linkages that

enhance agricultural production (Schneider, K and Gugerty, M.K 2011). Improved roads expand farm and non-farm production through increased availability of relevant inputs and lower inputs costs as well as growth in rural enterprises (Lokshin and Yemtsov, 2005). This means improved rural roads increase the scope of profitable trade which in turn raises rural income, lowers prices. It also reduces spatial disparity in food prices and the dependence on food imports (Ayinde, O.E., muchie, M., Adewumi, M.O and Abaniyan, E.O 2012).

In rural Nigeria, like many other countries in Africa, agriculture is the key provider of the people's income and plays a vital role in rural development. Most rural households in Nigeria (and elsewhere in Africa) are involved in farming and much of their income is obtained from farming activities (Davis, 2010). The promotion of these income-earning opportunities depends on rural transport infrastructure. Unfortunately, transport routes or roads are in poor condition as such goods cannot always be transported and even when transported at all, the costs are very high. This explains why poverty is concentrated in the rural areas.

Nigeria has been experiencing rising population and recurring hunger as a result of soaring prices of staple foods. This makes transport a very strategic aspect of development of rural areas and their productivity especially in relationship to agriculture. Transport is one of the elements that play important part in boosting agricultural production and also in preventing post-harvest losses. However, in most parts of rural Nigeria, people hardly travel easily because the condition of the rural roads is generally bad. In fact, travel in rural Nigeria takes place with great difficulty. Many communities are often cut off from others. Particularly during the rainy season, most of the roads deteriorate and become impassable thereby subjecting the people to low levels of connectivity.

It was in realization of the benefits of rural roads to agricultural and rural development that Amaafu-Abaji road, Amaafu- Ugba road and Zaki-Biam –Ugba road were constructed. This paper therefore assesses the impact of these roads on rural development in the three local government areas of Benue state namely; Katsina-Ala, Logo and Ukum.

METHODOLOGY

In assessing the impact of roads in the study area, survey approach was used. Data were collected through the application of personal interviews, trans-sect walk observation and self-administered multi-choice questionnaires. The personal interviews provided the opportunity to obtain information from the Directors of Works Departments of the selected local government areas on the provision and maintenance schedule of the roads and their constraints. Two sets of semi-structured multi-choice questionnaires were designed. The first set provided opportunity to elicit information from commercial drivers who ply the roads on almost daily basis about the condition(s) of the roads

Three roads namely; Amaafu –Abaji (in Katsina-ala LGA), Amaafu(in Katsina-ala LGA) linking Ugba the headquarters of Logo LGA, and Zaki-Biam (in Ukum LGA) linking with Ugba (in Logo LGA). Along each of these roads, three concentrated settlement areas were purposively selected and the second set of structured multi-choice questionnaires was applied. Along Amaafu-abaji road, the settlements were Tse-Nyajo, Tomataan, and Asagh Igbe. On Amaafu- Ugba road, the settlements were Awuapila, Ikyume and Tyogbenda. Along Zaki-Biam –ugba road the following settlements were surveyed namely; Une, Gonduzua and abeda. The choice of these settlements was because of their geographical spread. The second set of

questionnaires was thus personally administered to 20 respondents across gender and generation in each of the three purposively selected concentrated settlement areas making a total sample size of 180 respondents. This provided the opportunity to assess the impact of the roads on the socio-economic lives of members of the benefiting communities.

The trans-sect walk observation provided an opportunity for me to take note of the state of the roads as I drove along them thereby collaborating what I observed with what members of the communities said.

Study Area

Benue state is made up of twenty three local government areas of which Katsina-Ala, Logo and Ukum are a part. Both local government areas have a combined population of 612,024 as at 2006 census (Katsina-Ala-225,471; Logo-169,570 and Ukum-216,983). Their combined population projection is 826,200 according to 2016 Population Statistics (Katsina-Ala-304,400; Logo-228,900 and Ukum-292,900). The three local government areas fall within what is known by the Tiv geo-political delineation as the Sankera Axis (It should be noted that Tivland is geo-politically delineated into five units namely; Jekhchira, Jekhngbagh, Kwande, Minda and Sankera).

The local government areas are culturally uniform with extensive arable land. The local government areas are populated majorly by the Tiv who are aggressive farmers. They collectively share boundaries with Wukari LGA (in Taraba state) in the North, Takum LGA (again in Taraba state) and northern Kwande LGA (in Benue state) in the East, Guma LGA in the west. The study area also shares boundary with Buruku and eastern Kwande LGAs in the south.

As already stated, the people are aggressive farmers. Major crops grown include yams, maize, rice, groundnut, beans beniseed, soyabeans, millet/sorghum, etc. The major periodic markets to which agricultural products are taken to for sale include Zaki-Biam (Ukum LGA), Ugba, Anyiin (Logo LGA), Amaafu, Abaji and Donga (all in Katsina-Ala LGA). The study area has a favourable climatic condition for the production of both food and cash crops.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data were collected from Directors of works departments of the various local government areas, commercial drivers and members of the benefiting communities. Discussions with Directors of works department of the various LGAs revealed that there are federal, state and local government roads in Benue state just as in other states of the federation and that the ones under study were state roads and were constructed by the state as a fulfilment of part of the campaign promises to the people. They posited that after their construction, the state government however charged the LGAs in which territories the roads were constructed to carry out regular maintenance on them. However, the Directors were in agreement that maintenance of existing roads and construction of new ones has been problematic to every local government in Benue state and indeed Nigeria due to insufficient allocation of funds to the local governments. They also lamented the frequent changes in the leadership of local governments in the state. They posited that the changes have been affecting every fabric of local government life especially road maintenance and construction as every new local government chairman

always comes with his/her own development agenda. This means the changes have been creating policy inconsistencies.

Assessment of the Impact

An assessment of the impact was determined using the following road users- commercial drivers and members of the community. The commercial drivers were unanimous that all the roads had only one lane but that their quality was good because they were all reliable in both the dry and rainy seasons. Structured observation confirmed this position. Nevertheless, it was also observed that some positions of the roads had bad surface condition and poor drainage system. This condition of the roads could be attributed to non maintenance by the authorities concerned.

The impact of the roads to members of the benefiting communities was assessed using trip distribution-the most common trips, trip frequency to neighbouring communities/towns, and waiting time at roadside. A traffic survey was also carried out to ascertain the validity of the claims of members of the benefiting communities.

Interaction with members of the benefiting communities with regard to trip distribution revealed that their most frequent trips were market and social trips. More than three quarters of all the respondents (160 or 88.89%) were in agreement that their most frequent trip is the market trip. It should be borne in mind that majority of the people in the study area are farmers. Therefore, the condition of roads has significant effect on their farming activities. Much of what the farmers produce are perishable in nature. This means without good roads, transportation of these produce to neighbouring markets and towns where the farmers could have better prices would be difficult. Respondents were therefore in a consensus that the construction of the roads has greatly enhanced the transportation of their produce to the markets where they now have better prices for the goods.

Generally, urban centres are centres of attraction to rural dwellers. Adequate rural transportation facilitates this interaction between rural and urban dwellers. The interaction enhances easy exchange of goods and services. Most of the respondents (143 or 79.44%) said since the construction of the roads, the frequency of their trips to the markets and neighbouring communities has increased significantly. To them, the roads have tremendously linked them to the markets and have also helped them maintain their social ties especially with their distant in-laws and friends who were hitherto unreachable. This position is in line with the position by Schneider, K. and Gugerty, M.K.(2011) that adequate rural transportation plays a strategic role in linking rural communities to markets and also fulfils a vital role in transporting goods locally and maintaining social ties.

In many parts of rural Nigeria, vehicles hardly ply rural roads because of the bad condition of the roads. In such communities, commuters usually wait for considerable length of time by the roadside before they could get a vehicle. In our context, commuters were in agreement that with the construction of the roads, it is easy to get vehicles to convey their farm produce to the markets or to visit their friends in the neighbouring communities

To ascertain the validity of the claims by the respondents, a traffic survey was conducted. In each of the communities selected and surveyed, there are important or well recognized periodic markets along side with minor ones. Therefore, a traffic survey was conducted to determine the volume of traffic on such market days compared to ordinary days. The survey showed marked variation in the volume of traffic between market days and ordinary days. The volume

of traffic on market days was far higher than on ordinary days. This means movement of people and goods on market days is much faster and easier on market days than on ordinary days. This also means more agricultural produce are brought to the markets due to low transport cost thereby creating a glut (somehow) with a consequent reduction in the cost of the produce. However, the survey also revealed that though traffic on ordinary days was slow, movement of people to other communities was still easier and faster.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study has shown that sustainable rural development is a function of many factors. One of such factors is road transportation especially rural roads. Roads facilitate increase in agricultural productivity by reducing transport costs. Rural roads enable farmers to have easy access to markets. With easy access to markets, improved roads expand farm and nonfarm production through increased availability of relevant inputs and lower input costs. Rural roads vitalize rural towns and increase consumers demand in rural areas and facilitate the integration of hitherto remote areas into national economies.

Due to the crucial role rural markets also play in socio-economic development of rural areas the management and regular maintenance of rural roads become imperative. The poor state of rural roads in Nigeria has a direct impact on the cost of transportation. It is therefore recommended that both the federal, state and local governments should make the construction and rehabilitation of rural roads a priority in their developmental agenda. Construction of roads and the rehabilitation of existing ones will reduce the cost of transporting goods and passengers.

Local governments should be particularly empowered to open up new roads to facilitate the transportation of goods to the markets at reduced costs. The crazy idea of abandoning old policies especially projects that have direct bearing on the socio-economic welfare of the people by successive local government chairmen/women should be de-emphasized.

The provision of rural roads will improve the income of the rural dwellers. The provision of roads to link rural areas with urban centres will reduce the rate of post-harvest losses. It should be borne in mind that Nigeria has been experiencing rapid rate of urbanization and population growth with the attendant consequences of diminishing farmland and rising demand for food per person. This therefore calls for a more efficient transport infrastructure to transport food from the rural areas to the urban centres to maintain the food supply. In fact, the war being embarked upon in Nigeria to combat food crisis so as to enhance food security can only be won if sincere attention is paid to rural infrastructure especially rural roads.

Most rural communities in Nigeria are characterized by paths and tracts that connect to state roads and onwards to federal roads. These path networks are widely used for the purposes of collecting fuel wood and for establishing and maintaining social contacts-aspects that are important to rural development. Therefore, rural communities themselves should ensure that these paths and tracts including bridges and culverts are regularly maintained through communal efforts.

REFERENCES

- Aderamo, A.J and Omolaran, O.I (2006) "Accessibility Problem and the Incidence of Poverty in Nigerian Rural economy: A Case Study of Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State" *Geostudies Forum* 3(2)45-56
- Aderamo, A.J and Magaji, S.A (2010) "Rural Transportation and the Contribution of Public Facilities in Nigeria: A case study of Edu Local government Area of Kwara State" *Journal of Human Ecology* 29(3) 171-179
- Adesanya, A., Philips, A.O and Titilayo, S.T (2000) Transport Development in Nigeria in 2010 Ibadan." Nigeria Institute of Social and Economic Research NISER)
- Adewumi, R. (undated) Nigerian Roads: Road Map to progress
- Arethun, T and Bhatta, B.P (2012) "Contribution of rural roads to Access to- and Participation in Markets: Theory and results from Northern Ethiopia" *Journal of Transport Technologies* 2(2) 165-175
- Ayinde, O.E., Muchie, M., Adewumi, M.O and Abaniyan, E.O (2012) "Risk Analysis of Gender in Innovation System: a Case Study of Production of Downy Mildew Maize Resistant Variety in Kwara State- Nigeria". *Obeche Journal* 30(1) 459-465
- Buys, P., Deichmann, U and Wheeler, D (2006) Road Network Upgrading and Overland Trade Expansion in Sub-Saharan Africa. Washington Development Research Group. The World Bank
- DFID (2008) Better Roads for Africa; Research News Research for Development Accessed 18/4/2017
- Donngos, C., Edmonds, G and Johannesson, B (2007) Rural Roads Maintenance: sustaining the Benefits of Improved Access. International Labour Organization (ILO), Bangkok. Accessed 15/3/2017
- Lokshin, M and Yemtsov, R (2005) "Has Rural Infrastructure rehabilitation in Georgia helped the Poor?" *World Bank Economic Review* 19(2) 311-333
- Mitiku, T. N. (2009). A Framework for a Pro- Growth, Pro- Poor Transport Strategy. Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Programme, Working paper 89.
- Ogunyemi, S.A; Muibi, K.H; Eguaroje, O.E; Fabiyi, O.O and Halilu, A.S (2014) A Geospatial Approach to Evaluation of Accessibility to Secondary Educational Institution in Ogun State. IOP conference Series: earth and Environmental science No 20. Accessed 8/4/2017
- Schneider, K and Gugerty, M.K (2011) "Agricultural Productivity and Poverty Reduction: Linkages and Pathways" *The Evans School Review* 1(1) 56-74
- Tighe, D (2006) Roads and Poverty Reduction. Paper presented at the International Seminar on Rural Road Transport, Siem Reap, Cambodia 15-16 May. Accessed 13/3/2017
- World Bank (2016) Agriculture and Poverty Reduction: World Development Report. Accessed 8/4/2017