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**THEORETICAL MODELS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN
NIGERIA**
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ABSTRACT

Despite several attempts at the development of rural Nigeria, results have yielded more failures than successes. This paper examines the reasons for these failures and develops the position that faulty theoretical models of rural development have contributed to this emerging catastrophe. The paper ends by providing a more workable model of rural development through some theoretical recommendations.

**A CRITIQUE OF RURAL
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIAN**

Rural development in Nigeria has undergone several modifications in both ideology and practice. However, successive Governments have used the mobilization approach. Mobilization approach according to Obanure (1998) is "a process whereby human beings are made aware of the resources at their disposal and are also motivated and energized to collectively utilize such resources for the improvement of their spiritual and material well-being". Some of other mobilization techniques include:

- I. **The National Accelerated Food Production Programmed (NAFPP):** The NAFPP was created in 1973 by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture with the Primary aim of increasing staple food production through the promotion of improved technology among the small-scale farmers. This they hoped to achieve through loans and incentives to rural farmers Afobyan (1995). However 30 years down the road, there are more mouths to feed than the food on the table or floor of Nigerian families.
- II. **The River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA):** The Federal Government decided to give priority attention to irrigation farming after the drought of 1972/73. The Ministry of Water

Resources was created in 1975. One of the major assignments, of the ministry was the development of River Basin Authorities in 1976. This was recommended by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). However, this did not achieve much as bureaucrats benefited over and above the interests of the rural farmers and this explains the failure of this programme. Today the river basins lie as graveyards of wasted farmlands, dilapidated buildings and broken down farm machineries with nothing to show for the billions of naira and dollars sunk into them since Obasanjo's first missionary journey in 1976.

- III. **The Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs):** The origin can be traced back to 1992 when the World Bank, Federal Government and some Northern Governments signed agreement for agricultural development. The projects were originally three and sited in Funtua, Gombe, and Gusau. The objectives of the ADPs include (a) to increase crop production and "(b) to raise rural income and hence the standard of living or rural dwellers ..." Afolayan (1995). The programme is assessed to be a major contributor to the significant growth recorded in the agricultural sector in the late 80s to early 90s. However it will be misleading to suggest that ADPs represents a success story in an otherwise catastrophic sector as agriculture in Nigeria.
- IV. **The Operation Feed the Nation (OFN):** The exercise was launched by President Obasanjo in 1976. The launching of the programme was motivated by the Government's realization that Nigeria as a Nation, was lagging behind in food production for both domestic consumption and export. The aim of the programme was to reawaken in the citizens the awareness and the need to improve on our agricultural

activities and enhance self – sufficiency in agricultural produce (cf, Amujiri, 1989).

The government hoped to achieve this by the cultivation of arable lands and encouraging people with financial assistance to increase backyard poultry and farms. Television, radio and newspapers were used to enlighten people on the new food policy. Historical evidence is there to suggest to all Nigerians and the whole world that OFN could not feed Nigeria. All that remains of OFN is the Obasanjo Farms Nigeria Limited based in Otta, Ogun State.

- V. The Green Revolution Programme:** The green revolution was introduced by then President Shehu Shagari in 1980. The aim was to boost rural agriculture and also ensure integrated rural development. According to Amujiri (1993), the green revolution was to be achieved “through the establishment of agro based industries, construction of feeder roads, provision of housing, education, and health facilities, water and electricity”. Twenty-four years since Shagari’s pet project, there has been no revolution in sight in Nigerian agriculture and Nigeria has not turn green either. On the other hand it is going brown with hunger and poverty, diseases and unemployment.
- VI. Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure:** President Ibrahim Babangida established Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986. Afolayan (1995) noted that “DFRRI was also to provide the rural communities the necessary technical and financial supports for the projects throughout the project development stages. Greater community participation is the bane of the DFRRI as a concept”. Like all other projects of the Babangida administration, [1985 – 1993] the DFRRI, SAP, MAMSER, Better Life, Peoples’ Bank etc were all huge jokes played on unsuspecting but naïve Nigerians by a man who called himself the Maradona of the Nation.
- VII. Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self – Reliance and Economic Recovery**

(MAMSER): MAMSER was launched in 1987 by President Ibrahim Babangida. The central themes of MAMSER were self – reliance, self – sufficiency, economic recovery and social justice. In her own contribution Ogbazi (1992) noted that “the vantage target of the new social policy focus were the rural folks long deprived and neglected in their own lands. Do we need to comment further that MAMSER brought no social justice, no self – reliance and no economic recovery for Nigeria. Rather it brought mass misery and servitude to Nigerian citizens. In consequence of the above analysis so far, we now present strategies and policy options that may lead to the development of rural areas in Nigeria

STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria should adopt the application of science and technology in her rural development bid. The old tools should be supplemented with modern farming machineries. Okafor and Onokerhoraye (1994) quoting Hewes (1974) noted that in the Western world, the old conventional chemical fertilizer was strengthened and reinforced, and made more readily available to farmers by new and efficient production methods. A whole new array of pesticides, herbicides and insecticides were developed and miracle strains of rice, wheat, millet and sorghum were produced and this revolution ushered in what has been called the Green Revolution in Europe, America and much of Asia with a promise of unprecedented yields. These items could be made available to our rural farmers at affordable prices.

Agricultural extension should not begin and end in Faculties of Agriculture or Colleges of Agriculture and Nigerian Universities where academicians are only interested in making careers out of agricultural extension by publishing their research works in international journals. Researchers should be farmer – oriented and their primary objectives should be to improve the productivity of agriculture, to help farmers increase production by persuading them to

adopt improved technical practices. Agricultural extension researches should also pay attention to developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes of farmers, which are favourable to their overall welfare (Okafor and Onokerhoraye 1994)

In most rural areas of Nigeria, the rural people have discovered that Government has little interest in rural development. They now engage in community development by themselves. Even at this, the Government should not keep quiet. The Government at whichever level should stimulate the rural people to enhance the so-called "self - help" type of rural development. If the initiative for development is not forth coming from members of the community concerned, then the Government can stimulate interest by using enlightenment campaigns, the initiation of projects and financial aid for specific projects.

On individual basis, the poor cannot be reached, but as members of associations and groups, they create their own channels for institutional access. Therefore, they can shoulder the cost services through organizing local distribution and administration themselves. This multi - purpose organization may serve as a useful institution for rural development. What is required is Government support and assistance through cooperatives can mobilize indigenous capital for improved agricultural and community development.

The success of rural agricultural development may however depend largely upon a positive attitude of the Government towards agricultural and rural development as well as on a sound rural credit policy. Rural producers require loans for a variety of activities. These activities include the purchase of seeds, fertilizers, livestock and items of farm equipment, for marketing and payment of wages between planting and

harvesting, for the construction of building and the acquisition or extension farms, and for craftsmen and for non agricultural producers for activities such as establishing rural industries and retail business.

Rural people need food, electricity, healthcare, decent housing, education, employment, entertainment, and means of communication, facilities for social interactions. Rural electrification and improved sanitation are basic institutions in rural development. The latter is a measure of rural living standards and the former will arrest emigration of the youths from the rural areas. If electricity is available, rural people can use electrical appliances and processing plants. Better storage, heating and cooling facilities as well as other attractive conditions can be made readily available to rural farmers. In order to institutionalize the planning and implementation of rural development programmes, such Government programmes as the Directorate of Foods, and Rural Infrastructures should be made to have its presence permanently established in the Local Government areas. In that way, it will provide a permanent institution that will be responsible for monitoring, supervising, controlling and coordinating what happens at the grass roots with what happens at the top.

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