



**British Journal of Education, Society &  
Behavioural Science**  
4(12): 1640-1652, 2014

SCIENCEDOMAIN *international*  
[www.sciencedomain.org](http://www.sciencedomain.org)



---

## **Resource-Centred Rural Development Plans in Nigeria: Policies, Impacts, Challenges and Opportunities**

**Nseabasi S. Akpan<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Uyo, Nigeria.*

**Authors' contributions**

*This whole work was carried out by the author NSA.*

**Original Research Article**

**Received 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014**  
**Accepted 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014**  
**Published 30<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

---

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the role and impacts of resource availability in driving rural development in Nigeria. Particular emphasis is focused on understanding how the availability of specific resources in Nigeria's rural areas have shaped policy discourses, initiation and implementation processes. From the discussion, rural resources have been important in driving rural policy changes both positively and negatively. Agricultural-centered rural development policies were important in developing the rural areas both at pre-independence and in the period of commercial petroleum oil exploration. However, the commercial exploitation of petroleum resources in the 1970s served to undermine relevant and potential policy drives aimed at developing available rural resources. In this way rural resources have failed to transform into opportunities for development despite its contributions to the national economy. It is the recommendation of this paper that a national diversification be emphasized beyond petroleum oil dependence. More emphasis should be placed on strengthening agricultural productivity as well as exploring other natural resources potentials. These will reposition the rural areas as centers of development activities.

*Keywords: Rural resources; exploitation; policies; development; Nigeria.*

---

\*Corresponding author: Email: [akpan.nseabasi@gmail.com](mailto:akpan.nseabasi@gmail.com);

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The availability of natural resources has always influenced the development of an area at different levels. Sachs and Warner [1] have observed that natural resources in many states have contributed to shaping the development of local industries either positively or negatively. This is because natural resources have the capacity to contribute to investment, skills transfer, infrastructure development, employment generation, revenue and various forms of social development programs [2,3]. While some positive impacts have been linked to investments in equipment, infrastructure and facilities in some resource rich States [4], Sachs and Warner [5] argued that the situation in the African context has witnessed the phenomenon of 'Dutch disease'<sup>1</sup> impact on economic growth as part of the wider negative effect of an increased reliance on the extractive industry. This has been framed within the context of 'resource-curse'<sup>2</sup>, and some reasons for this revolve around the challenge of governance in promoting sustainable and equitable growth and the increased likelihood of conflict and disagreement amongst relevant stakeholders and actors [6,7,8]. Oil producing States in developing countries, particularly of African continent have been classified as experiencing more natural resources curse than blessing [9].

Beyond the 'resource-curse' perspective associated with natural resources, there has been a growing realization that natural resources have played significant role in driving development practice especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most literature often emphasizes the basic resource-centered view by highlighting the role and impact of agriculture in this perspective [10,11]. Investment in agricultural development has long been theorized as imperative to the development of other economic sectors in many ways [12] namely, by enhancing the provision of goods and services for the economy and export; by stimulating the generation of rural purchasing power which ultimately will affect the growth and productive capacities in other sectors; and by contributing to the generation of savings, investment and manpower in other sectors of the economy. Despite age-old argument linking economic development with industrialization, Miracle's [12:142] discussions on agricultural economics in Africa emphasized the direct impact of agricultural development on a number of national goals through its effect on the level, composition, and distribution of food supplies and wealth; through its effect on the level of unemployment and the rate of urban growth, and through its effect on birth and death rates. This implies that improvements in agriculture and related resource utilization have the potential of multiplying benefits not only to individual farmers but to the wider economy through improvement in spending, contribution to tax revenue, greater investment in infrastructure and a stronger foreign exchange position [13].

Historically, bigger and larger national development projects have often centered on agrarian-and resource-based models such as Green Revolution, Integrated Rural Development, with the rural areas forming the main focus areas. These background characteristics gave rise to the emergence of several agriculturally-based models as early as in the 1950s, to include small farm development, community development, intensive agricultural development, integrated rural development, livelihood approaches, and a variety of participatory policies. Ashley and Maxwell [14] observed that the evolution of mainstream policy on rural development is located on two axes-representing the balance between productive sectors and social sectors, and between state and market. For instance, in the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Dutch disease describes the syndrome of rising real exchange rates and wages driving out pre-existing export and import-competing industries.*

<sup>2</sup> *Resource-curse depicts a situation where large export-driven revenues from natural resources hardly translate to positive economic development and political stability. It is commonly used to describe the negative development outcomes associated with non-renewable extractive resources (e.g., petroleum and other mineral resources).*

1960s the green revolution was associated with large-scale state investment in infrastructure, research, and support for adoption of new technology. In the 1970s, budget priorities shifted somewhat to the social investments required by integrated rural development programs. In the 1980s came the structural adjustment where public sector institutions were trimmed and budgets cut, while the 1990s witnessed an upsurge of interest in poverty reduction.

Generally, interest in the development of rural areas stems from its inherent characteristics of being remote from the mainstream centers of development. The 'remoteness' characteristics of the rural areas constitute the main barrier to its development. Conway [15, as cited in 13] had made the following general remarks on the challenges within the rural spaces: 'the majority of the rural poor live in areas that are resource poor, highly heterogeneous, and risk prone...The worst poverty is often located in arid or semi-arid zones or in steep hill-slope areas that are ecologically vulnerable. There the poor are isolated in every sense. They have meagre holdings or access to land, little or no capital and few opportunities for off-farm employment. Labour demand is often seasonal and insecure. Extension services are few and far between, and research aimed specifically at their needs is sparse'.

Developing the rural areas has been important to overall reduction of poverty and improvement in livelihood opportunities. In sub-Saharan Africa, most policies on rural development are conceptualized within the framework of developing specific resources. Most literature overemphasizes on agriculture-based policies as drivers of rural development practices over several historical time-scales [11,16,17]. However, very little has been known as to the extent in which other non-agricultural resources shape rural development policies. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the role of rural resource characteristics in stimulating and fostering rural development policies and practices in Nigeria. The paper discusses the spatial aspects and characteristics of rural resources in Nigeria in relation to their specific impacts on the evolution of specific rural development policies. The paper is organized in segments. Immediately following the introductory section emerges a discourse on the spatial characteristics of rural resources availability in Nigeria from a historical perspective. The third section focuses on the chronology of rural development policies in Nigeria with specific emphasis on how such policies relate to specific resource development activities and epoch. The fourth section discusses the general impacts, challenges and opportunities of resource-centered rural development in Nigeria. The concluding section summarizes the main issues discussed and their implications, which were used as the basis for recommendations.

### **1.1 Nigeria's Rural Resources: Regional Availability and Utilization**

Nigeria is a country endowed with numerous mineral and natural resources corresponding to the dominant geographical regions of the north, south, east and west [18,19]. The diversity and uneven occurrence of these resources have given rise, over the years, to some forms of regional development patterns that depend on access to available material and non-material resources. The availability of natural resources of land, forestry, minerals, water and environmental climatic diversities triggered some forms of regional agricultural specialization. Consequently, agricultural export products such as cocoa, palm oil and kernel, rubber and groundnuts emerged as the dominant economic activities mostly practiced in the rural areas. Too much emphasis on export-based economic activities did not give room for interest in domestic food production and food security. According to Udo [20], all of Nigeria's dominant export crop producing areas became and still become 'food-deficit areas'. This has been

attributed to the persistent lack of investment and necessary incentives for agricultural productivity; over dependence on the petroleum oil sector and poor management of the national economy [21].

Small and large scale incidence of mining activities has also been part of the rural economic landscape in Nigeria. The boom experienced in the construction sphere in the 1970s supported the proliferation of small scale mining, otherwise referred to as quarrying. Consequently, the quarrying of sand, clay, gravel, red earth, marble and rocks, has opened widespread employment opportunities to a very large numbers of unskilled labour throughout Nigeria. Large scale mining was introduced in the country by the British. This was followed by the opening of coal mines in Enugu area and tin mines in the Jos Plateau. These were important for the economy in the forms of contribution to the revenue base, expansion in secondary activities as well as employment opportunities. The discovery of petroleum resources brought significant changes in the economic landscape of the country through improved revenue and the expansion of infrastructures. These led to the evolution of new policies and development agenda which had direct or indirect impact on rural development practice. Given this chronology of changes in rural resource utilization pattern, the main question arises: how have national policies been shaped or structured in line with patterns of resource utilization activities and what benefits have emerging policy directions shaped the development of Nigeria's rural areas? The next section of this paper attempts to answer these questions.

## **1.2 Rural Resources Utilization and the Evolution of Development of Policies**

Several scholarly studies [such as 11,22,23] suggest that Nigeria at pre-independence was dominantly rural which depended on natural resources for livelihood activities. Availability and abundance of natural resources in various forms was the main attraction for colonial adventure. Consequently, rural areas were available only as primary resource areas for export of raw materials and as food production centers for the few urban centers which eventually were to serve the basic food needs of the colonial inhabitants [23]. These were the basis for the emergence of rural development policies.

The colonial government Township Ordinance Act promulgated in 1917 dictated the developmental course of the rural areas when it classified settlements into first, second and third class for the purpose of infrastructural provision. The first class settlements were mostly settled by the white Europeans and their workers. Consequently, such settlements were the focus of heavy infrastructural concentration, and Lagos represented the classic example of such discriminatory infrastructural concentration. On the other hand, the second and the third class settlements were not given adequate policy attention in infrastructural provision [24]. The establishment of local government councils in Western Nigeria which were initially seen as avenues for expanding infrastructural facilities to the rural areas could not answer the question of coverage because of insufficient fund allocations [24].

In 1945 the colonial Development and Welfare Act was introduced with a 'Ten Year Plan of Development and Welfare' to facilitate the exploitation of rural resources [23]. Research institutes and marketing boards were established to improve production of crops as well as handle storage and marketing of export crops respectively. The Nigerian Cocoa Marketing Board was established in 1947 while other marketing boards for cotton, groundnuts and oil palm were set up in 1949. According to Iwuagwu [23], these marketing boards were more at the service of the colonial interest of local resource exploitation, which ended up

impoverishing the rural sources of economic capital through commodity price distortion and excessive taxation.

The 1946-1956 Development Plan was regionalized in 1954 when the Littleton Constitution was proclaimed. Such regionalization paved way for decentralized planning in which the various regional political entities were consequently empowered to evolve and implement appropriate development plans within their respective jurisdictional areas. As an outcome, a new development plan period that was to run between 1955 and 1960 was evolved. One common trend of rural development plans during the pre-independence period was a single emphasis on agricultural development and productivity. In contemporary times, it is commonly known fact that while the rural areas are still described as synonymous with peasant and subsistent agriculture [19,16,22,23,25,26], it is equally seen as synonymous with absence of basic infrastructural facilities such as sanitation, electricity, pipe-born water, good roads and health care services.

Post-independence rural development strategies in Nigeria were articulated under the various national development plans namely, the First National Development Plan (1962-1968); Second National Development Plan (1970-1974); the Third National Development Plan (1975-1980); the Fourth National Development Plan (1985-1990). All the development plans were dictated by the opportunities presented by resource availability and utilization patterns. The First National Development Plan was mainly anchored on the opportunities offered by regional specialization. Government sought to build on that through some growth targets. For instance, the main objective of Nigeria's First National Development Plan was to maintain and, if possible, to surpass the average rate of growth of 4% per year of its gross domestic product at constant prices. To realize the aim, government planned a yearly investment of approximately 15% of Nigeria's gross national product.

Given that agriculture was the major strength of Nigeria's economy, and which was largely identified with the rural areas, policy attention and governmental investment in it were seen as direct and indirect avenues of developing the rural areas. Using agriculture to develop the rural areas was, therefore, at the top of Nigeria's First National Development Plan agenda. According to Saheed [26], interest in rural development owed much to a number of events which had their origin in the colonial heritage and the unanticipated oil boom of the seventies. The author classified such driving factors to include massive rural-urban drift of able-bodied young men and women, declining productivity in agriculture, increasing food imports, growing unemployment and the widening gap in welfare terms between the urban and rural areas. Despite this policy effort at developing agriculture, and by implication the rural areas, the first national plan was more of an extended colonial policy and practice of exploitation. Abass [27] argues that under the First National Development Plan period, peasant farmers were further squeezed to produce cash crops, at the expense of the subsistence crops, for export. The plan itself did not articulate any clear statement or policy on rural infrastructural development. Rather, emphasis was placed on encouraging the assemblage of agricultural produce for export purpose, without strengthening the real agricultural base of the country by providing necessary infrastructure such as improved road network, electricity, agricultural processing facilities, and water, among several others.

The Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) affected the implementation of the First National Development Plan as all government efforts were focused at securing the unity of the country from the secessionist bid of the rebel Biafran group. It was after the Nigerian civil war that a new development plan was enunciated (1970-1974) with the main aims of: a) building a united, strong and self-reliant nation; b) building a great and dynamic economy; c)

building a just and egalitarian society; d) building a land of bright and full opportunities and; e) building a free and democratic society. This Second National Development Plan placed high priority on reconstruction as well as reducing the level of inequality among the social classes and between urban and rural areas. This plan derived its financial funding from the petroleum oil revenue. Its emphasis on reconstruction and on building egalitarian society significantly opened up the construction and small-scale mining industries whose impacts in the rural areas manifested through the proliferation and rise in the exploitation of the forestry resources in the rural areas for timber in order to service the growing construction industry.

Although its primary focus was not about rural development, the plan's intention of building a just and egalitarian society suggested holistic development whereby every segment of the Nigerian space and population were to be covered. Increased interest in petroleum exploration during this period soon translated into struggle for 'oil rents' which led to massive corruption at every levels of governance [28]. Huge spending and import of food characterized the state activity while agriculture that served as the mainstay of the regional economies of Nigeria was relegated to the background. Government's massive dependence on oil revenue during this period meant that all policies on rural development could no longer be on the agenda of government. This era in all perspectives was not favorable to rural development [21].

In the Third National Development Plan (1975-1980), rural development was revisited based on government conviction that such investment will contribute in closing the yawning gap between the demand for food and the supply capacity of the home-based industries. Consequently, government developed interest in modernizing agriculture and introducing new initiatives to strengthen the agricultural and food base of the nation. Although the objectives of the plan looked similar to those of the Second National Development Plan, there was a significant and radical approach as the plan emphasized the need to reduce regional disparities in order to foster national unity through the adoption of integrated rural development. Increased budgetary allocations was provided to fund diverse and interrelated rural development sectors as the provision for nationwide rural electrification scheme; the establishment of agricultural development projects (ADPs); the establishment of nine river basin development authorities (RBDAs); the construction of small dams and boreholes for rural water supply and the clearing of feeder roads for the evacuation of agricultural produce; the supply of electricity to rural areas from large irrigation dams; commitment of resources to large scale mechanized state farming enterprises; the introduction of Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) campaign and the Green Revolution and; public efforts at land reforms through the Land Use Act of 1978.

From the first to the third national development plans, there was observable progressive budgetary improvement to enhance the development of rural resources. Olorunfemi and Adesina [17] reported increasing financial allocation for agricultural development as follows (Table 1):

**Table 1. Financial allocation for agricultural in Nigeria's development plan periods in NGN**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> National development plan (1962-1968)</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> National development plan (1970-1974)</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> National development plan (1975-1980)</b>
30,835,000	71,447,000	2,201,373,000

*N/B: NGN-Nigerian Naira (#)*

The Fourth National Development Plan (1980-1985) attempted to apply integrated approach to rural development by focusing on the river basin development authority (RBDA). The period saw improved budgeting to the eleven River Basin Development Authorities whose functions include among other things, the construction of boreholes, dams, feeder roads and jetties. In this case the RBDAs was, to a large extent, empowered to develop the rural areas by opening up feeder roads, drilling boreholes and wells, building farm service centres and earth dams, among several others. This period saw increasing participation of all tiers and levels of governments in rural development activities especially in the areas of roads construction, healthcare services, and electricity provision and water supply. According to Filani [25], 'the 1981-1985 national Development Plan marked a turning point in rural development efforts in Nigeria because it was the first to recognize the rural sector as a priority area. The author argued that increase of 12% specific allocation to agriculture and rural development over 5% in the 1962-1968 plan represented significant political commitment to rural development practice.

The Post-Fourth Plan period, i.e. between 1986 and 1998 did not feature an articulated development plan. However, one key program such as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) was prominent. The structural adjustment program, for instance, witnessed the establishment of the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1985 for the purpose of providing rural infrastructures in the country side. The core of the Directorate's program was to promote rural productive activities as well as provide basic rural infrastructure such as feeder roads, water, electricity and housing as essential for the enhancement of the quality of life in the rural areas. Under the rural infrastructural development, the framework of the RBDAs were to be used in building small and large scale dams, irrigation channels, boreholes, dykes, flood and erosion projects, among others.

Subsequent efforts at rural development came in the light of Nigeria's democratic dispensation (1999-to date). A four-year development plan was initially articulated (1999-2003) with the objective of pursuing a strong, virile and broad-based economy that is highly competitive, responsive to incentives, private sector-led, diversified, market-oriented and open, but based on internal momentum for its growth [29,30]. Emphasis on private sector-led growth did not carry sufficient message for rural development. As the prospect of achieving the intended objective of the plan did not materialize, a re-think was therefore necessary, and such rethink eventually led to the emergence of a new program namely, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) that covered the period between 2003 and 2007. NEEDS was quite comprehensive and ambitious, as it was not only duplicated at all levels of governments (State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy-SEEDS; and Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy-LEEDS), it incorporated the private sector, non-governmental organization and the general public in pursuits of its developmental goals. As a framework for poverty reduction and for the stimulation of economic growth, NEEDS' key objective was to facilitate a broad-based market-oriented economy that will involve active participation of the private sector, with the main source of economic empowerment coming from the generation of gainful employment opportunities as well as the provision of social safety nets for vulnerable groups. By attempting to empower the rural populace, NEEDS had a substantive vision of eliminating rural poverty and promoting the development of the rural space.

From the above analyses, it can be argued that Nigeria's rural development practice has been largely shaped by the prevailing circumstances of rural resources availability and utilization as well as the pulse of prevailing political and economic circumstances of the moment. The agrarian factor of the colonial and early independence periods and; the

emergence of oil exploration in the 1970s have been critical in dictating the course of rural transformation and change. The next section discusses the general impact, challenges and opportunities associated with resource-centered rural development practices.

### **1.3 Resource-centered Rural Development Practice: Impact, Challenges and Opportunities**

Natural resources availability and exploitation have formed the basis of changing the rural areas in Nigeria either negatively or positively. From the discussion, Nigeria's rural areas have served in two perspectives either as centers of agricultural production at colonial period or petroleum oil production at post-colonial/post-independence. Colonial Nigeria dominantly depended on peasant agriculture to promote regional specializations in agricultural production. As observed in the previous discussion, regionally-based export commodities such as cocoa in the west, oil palm production in the east, and groundnuts and cotton in the north were rural-based crops and plantation practices that contributed to the improvement of government revenue at the center through direct taxation and foreign exchange earnings. Besides being the major source of subsistence for the local inhabitants, Ahazuema and Falola [31] reported that plantation agriculture accounted for about 70% of Nigeria's total export in colonial times. This, however, was at a cost to the rural areas which provided the base for these economic activities. Watt [32] particularly observed that the exploitation of Nigeria's rural resources by the colonial government was deeply characterized by forced labour and poor returns as a result of the expansionist ideologies of the European merchant firms. Within this expansionist framework, peasant farmers and producers were induced to expand their output of designated export commodities required by the British industrial capital [28].

In summary, it can be argued that the Nigerian colonial economy was not only rural-based, it was equally structured to enhance the economic success of the colonizing powers. The ultimate impact therefore, was the subjection of the rural population, particularly farmers to endless exploitation by dominant British-based multinational capital companies such as United Africa Company, John Holt, Paterson and Zochonis (PZ) and Lever Brothers [33, cited in 34).

The importance of rural resources and their subsequent exploration contributed in facilitating enhanced labour mobilization, thereby generating some forms of local employment opportunities. Able-bodied men and women assumed various roles in productive agricultural activities, not only to serve their food needs, they equally contributed in fulfilling the commercial and mercantile interests of the colonial masters. Their efforts were, however, exploited for the purpose of fostering the exploitation and accumulation of rural resources and subsequent transfer of its wealth to the urban British elites as well as the countries of the colonizing power.

Post-independence rural development practices and policies were dominantly shaped by the contexts of 'petroleum oil resources boom', which translated into astronomically increased revenue on government purse. This has implication on rural development practices and policies. For instance, 'petroleum oil boom' soon changed the structure of state-society relations with the emergence of highly centralized state administrative structure such as Lagos, Abuja as well as new centers of urban ization at Port Harcourt, Warri, Kaduna, Ibadan, etc. New States were politically created i.e. from 12 to 19 States between 1970 and 1980; with new capitals as new urban centers. The proliferation of States subsequently led



to the emergence of many administrative and economic institutions which increasingly depended on federal allocation, which itself depended on the continued flow of oil revenue. Watts and Bassett [28, cited in 35] argued that Nigeria's 'oil boom', not only consolidated central power, it led to a phenomenal rise in the federal government revenue. For instance between 1970 and 1980, the average rate of growth of federal revenue was 26 percent per annum and the average annual rate of growth of expenditures and net loans over the same period was 21 percent [35].

Rural areas suffered most in the context of oil exploration as the greatest impact of Nigeria's 'oil prosperity' manifested more in the agricultural sector than any other sector. While Nigeria had attained some level of self-sufficiency in staple food production in the first decade of political independence, by 1980 and onward, Nigeria slid into the position of being the largest food importer in Africa. According to Watts and Bassett [28] agricultural export production had effectively collapsed by the mid-1970s, food production stagnated, food imports grew by 700 percent and real food output per capita over the period 1970-1978 fell by 1.5 percent annum. The per capita food production in 1981 was 18 percent below that of 1967-1970 (the authors cited Hunt and D' Silva, 1981). The emergence of such programmes between 1975 and 1980, as the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and small dam projects did not produce meaningful impact because of poor and declining public investments. Watts and Bassett [28] reported that the period between 1971 and 1981 witnessed a percentage decline in the total expenditures on agriculture and infrastructures from 7 percent and 31 percent to 4 percent and 24 percent respectively. While the agricultural sector dominated Nigeria's export economy prior to the 1970s, the situation was not the same from 1970s onward as the percentage of total agricultural exports consistently declined to an all-time low of 2.6 in 1980.

As petroleum oil revenue was used in the creation of new urban centers of economic and informal activities, there consequently emerged a phenomenon of rural-urban migration. Since 'petroleum oil revenues' were mostly spent in the development of urban centers, many young and able-bodied men were soon attracted to the cities and towns in search of employment opportunities and consequently improve and enhance their chances and prospect of benefitting from the nation's oil wealth. Such large-scale and unprecedented drift to the urban areas has numerous socio-economic and environmental effect as Watts and Bassett [28:109] observed: 'rapid and unplanned urban growth, a commodity boom of unprecedented proportions and a sort of anarchistic squalor were the most compelling characteristics of the oil years in Nigeria. Port Harcourt mushroomed from 200,000 in 1969 to 800,000 in 1977; Warri and Lagos grew even faster. At the height of construction boom, cities such as Kano, Warri or Ibadan had an untamed frontier quality to them. Universities, hospitals, freeways and airports moved ahead with chaotic abandon that the internal demand for cement constantly outstripped supply. The impact of rural-urban migration and consequent labour shortage in the rural areas created difficulties in gaining access to labour especially when public interventions in the form of ADPs, RBDAs, OFN were to be implemented.

#### **1.4 Summary**

This paper was conceived to understand the impact and role of resources in shaping policies and overall development of Nigeria's rural areas. From the discussion, rural resources have been important in driving rural policy changes mostly in agricultural production at pre- and post-independence. Particular impacts were observed in agricultural exports and subsequent

revenues to the national economy as well as in the mobilization of rural labour force. Through the opportunities offered by available resources and their exploitation, regional economic specialization was fostered at pre-independence up to the early period of Nigeria's independence. The colonial agricultural development policies and strategies remained relevant in the post-independence Nigeria up to the early 1970s. Olorunfemi and Adesina [17] had argued that agriculture assumed the centre-stage of Nigeria's economy in the decade 1960-1970, when it was nationally reckoned and utilized as the major income earner for both the people and the government.

Besides supplying local food needs for the population, production of such cash crops as cocoa, groundnuts, palm produce etc. were regionally strengthened as the major sources of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings. Given that the greater percentage of agricultural activities in Nigeria takes place in the rural areas, the early post-independence rural development practice were mostly centering on agrarian production and development in contents, policies and practices. In this case, the rural areas still served as major centers for resource extraction for foreign exchange earnings, national income and urban development. There were absolutely no conscious efforts at transforming the rural areas beyond investment in agriculture and agriculture-based infrastructures. While the State could not use agricultural development in transforming the rural livelihoods, agriculture itself was important and natural livelihood facts that sustained the rural population in employment, food, income as well as serving as a bridge in fostering social relations. These socio-economic and livelihood realities have been structurally internalized and reproduced across generations and regions. The commercial exploitation of petroleum resources in the 1970s served to undermine relevant and potential policy drives at developing available rural resources. Although oil exploration is carried out in rural areas, its revenues and benefits are mostly transferred to urban areas and overseas. In this way rural resources have failed to transform into opportunities for development despite its contributions to the national economy.

It can be seen from the discussion that although the availability of natural resources have shaped the evolution and development of rural policies, such policies hardly translate to concrete rural transformation experiences. Long years of military involvements in Nigeria's political landscape, poor understanding and synchronization of development plans with local realities, absence of effective development planning and institutional capacity and the problem of institutionalized corruption, have posed tremendous challenges to the vision of resource-based rural development goals. Most policies at the moment still remain largely exploitative as rural agricultural development programs still reflect colonial tendencies of using the rural resources to guarantee stable food supplies for the leaders and urban elites. The implication is that more rural-development based policies are largely focused on the agricultural sector to the detriment and neglect of many other promising and productive sectors. These limit opportunities of wider livelihood choices as well as undermining the goals of promoting and strengthening regional comparative advantages.

It is important to understand that Nigeria's rural development policies and programs are often packaged at the top and handed down to the people without conscious and informed participation at the bottom level. Peoples' voices are hardly incorporated in rural development policies and programs. Within these operational contexts, rural development practice can hardly optimize the full potential of developing the rural resources for economic development and livelihood improvements. While agriculture has been given overemphasis in policy documents and implementation, other key sectors including rural small scale craft industries and human capital development remain largely ignored.

## **2. CONCLUSION**

Clearly, this paper has argued that Nigeria's rural resources have been important in driving rural policy changes both positively and negatively. Rural agriculturally-based development policies at pre-independence and in the period of commercial petroleum oil exploration served to open up the rural spaces for diverse forms of agricultural practices and contributed to foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria. However, the commercial exploitation of petroleum resources in the 1970s later undermined relevant and potential policy drives aimed at developing available rural resources. In this way rural resources failed to transform into opportunities for development despite its contributions to the national economy. Discussions in the paper have emphasized the imperative of re-prioritizing agricultural development programs in Nigeria's national development agenda. Indigenously centered rural development policies should be used to promote strong local contents and encourage citizens' participation. By these trajectories, it would be possible to open up more regional trade opportunities to strengthen the benefits of comparative advantages. Nigeria's spatial and socio-economic diversities are mostly located in rural areas. Consequently, policies aimed at full development and utilization of rural resources are capable of addressing historically rooted socio-economic and spatial inequities embedded in past rural development plans during the pre-and post-colonial periods. Such policies could be more productive through the framework of a national diversification plans. With such plans in place, it would be possible for emerging policies to focus more on exploring other channels of natural resources than the current focus on petroleum oil, and to some extent, agricultural productivity.

## **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Sachs J, Warner A. Natural resource abundance and economic growth. Development Discussion Paper, 517a. Cambridge MA: Harvard Institute of International Development; 1995.
2. Sachs J, Warner A. The big push, natural resource booms and growth. *Journal of Development Economics*. 1999(59);43-76.
3. Murphy K, Shleifer A, Vishny R. Industrialization and the big push. In Bardhan P. and Udry C. (eds). *Readings in development microeconomics*, Cambridge Massachussetts: MIT Press. 2000;1.
4. Joskow P. Contract duration and relationship-specific investments: empirical evidence from coal markets. *American Economic Review* 1987;(77):168-85.
5. Sachs, J., Warner, A. Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth. Revised version. Unpublished manuscript. Harvard Institute for International Development. Cambridge, MA; 1997.
6. Burnside C. and Dollar D. Aid, policies and growth. *American Economic Review* 2000;(90):847-68.
7. Easterly E. Can foreign aid buy growth? *Journal of Economic Perspective*. 2003(17);23-48.
8. Glaeser E, La Porta R, Lopez-de-Silanes F, Shleifer A. Do institutions cause? *Journal of Economic Growth*. 2004(9);271-30.

9. Auty R. Sustaining development in mineral economies. The resource curse. London, Routledge; 1993.
10. Sotte F. An evolutionary approach to rural development: some lessons for the policy maker. Introductory Speech to the Conference of the Slovenian Associations of Agricultural Economist, Ljubjana, 14th April 2003. *Studi sull'Adriatico e i Balcani*. 2003;(3):1-21
11. Mustapha AR, Meagher K. Agrian production, public policy and the State in Kano region, 1900-2000. Working paper 35. Drylands Research, Crewkerne, Somerset, United Kingdom; 2000.
12. Miracle PM. Agricultural economics in Africa: trends in theory and method. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. No 1, Special Issue; Rural Africa, Accessed 26 June 2014. Winter. 1969;141-151.
13. ODI. Rethinking rural development. ODI Briefing Paper. Overseas Development Institute, London; 2002. Available on: [www.odi.org.uk](http://www.odi.org.uk),
14. Ashley C, Maxwell S. Rethinking rural development. *Development Review*, 2001;19(4):395-425.
15. Conway G. The doubly Green Revolution. Harmonds worth: Penguin Books; 1997.
16. Abdu MS, Marshall R. Agriculture and development policy: a critical review of Nigerian experience in the period upto 1985. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 1990;6(3):311-323.
17. Olorunfemi A, Adesina OC. Politics and Nigerian Agriculture in the first decade of the oil boom, 1970-1980: a preliminary assessment. *Nigerian Journal of Economic History*. 1998(1);57-69.
18. Agboola SA. An agricultural atlas of Nigeria, Oxford University Press, London, 1979.
19. Onokerhoraye AE. Planning for rural development in Nigeria: a spatial approach. *Community Development Journal*. 1978;13:1.
20. Udo RK. Food deficit areas of Nigeria. *Geographical Review LXI*. 1970(3);415-430.
21. Akpan NS. Rural development in Nigeria: a review of pre-and post-independence practice. *Journal of Sociological Research* 2012;3 (2):146-159.
22. Udeh CA. Rural development in Nigeria. *Habitat Intl* 1989;13 (3):95-100.
23. Iwuagwu O. Rural development in eastern Nigeria: an assessment of colonial and post-colonial development plans in the former Owerri Province, 1946-1976. *Lagos Historical Review*. 2006(6);118-132.
24. Olayiwola LM, Adeleye OA. Rural Infrastructural Development in Nigeria: Between 1960 and 1990-problems and challenges. *Journal of Social Science*, 2005;1(2):91-96.
25. Filani MO. Transport and rural development in Nigeria. *Journal of Transport Geography*. 1993;1(4):248-254.
26. Saheed AB. Poverty situation in Nigeria. An overview of rural development institutions. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 2010;7(5):351-356.
27. Abass IM. The challenge of rural development strategies in a deregulated economy. Paper presented at a national seminar on rural development-doing more less developing rural resources in a deregulated economy-organized by New Nigerian Newspapers Limited in collaboration with Arthur Green consultants held at Shiroro Hotel Minna, Niger State from; 1993.
28. Watts MJ, Bassett TJ. Politics, the state and agrarian development: a comparative study of Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. *Political Geography Quarterly*. 1986;5(2):103-125.
29. Marcellus IO. Development planning in Nigeria: reflections on the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), 2003-2007. *Journal of Social Sciences*. 2009;20(3):197-210.
30. Donli JG. An overview of Nigeria's economic reforms. *NDIC Quarterly*. 2004;1(4):62-82.

31. Ahazuem JO, Falola T. Production for the Metropolis: agriculture and forest products. In: T. Falola (ed). Britain and Nigeria. Exploitation or development? London. ZED Books Ltd. 1987;76-93.
32. Watts M. Silent violence: food, famine and peasantry in northern Nigeria. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1983.
33. Ajayi, G. Internal politics of decolonization and the emergence of neo-colonial in post-independence Nigeria. In: G. Ajayi (ed). Critical perspectives on Nigeria's socio-political development in the 20th century. Lagos: Stebak Books. 1999;21-28.
34. Shokpeka SA, Nwaokocha OA. British colonial economic policy in Nigeria, the example of Benin province 1914-1954. *Journal of Human Ecology* 2009;28(1):57-66.
35. Amuzegar J. Oil exporters' economic development in an inter-dependent world. Occasional Paper, No. 18. Washington DC: IMF; 1983.

---

© 2014 Akpan; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

*Peer-review history:*

*The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:*

<http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history.php?iid=614&id=21&aid=5586>