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RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: OBJECTIVES, AGENTS, AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT
This work focused on rural development in Nigeria: objectives, agents, and challenges. The work was carried out to identify the major hindrances to development and the solution to the problems. The researcher used only secondary source of data as the research was descriptive in nature. It was found that the objectives of rural development include agricultural development, job creation, health care development, infrastructural development, improved local industries, and

Introduction
To make people living in rural communities to enjoy comfortable live, stay in the communities, and achieve their socio-economic goals, there is need for rural development. According to Ozoemenam (2019), when there is improved rural development, the people in rural communities will enjoy steady electric power supply, security of lives and properties, good road network, functional primary health care, qualitative primary education, and there will be improved rural development and rural communities will enjoy good standard of living. Community development is therefore the improvement in the human capital and infrastructural aspects of rural communities or villages. In this case, the major role of government at federal, states and local levels to improve development at the rural level.

The Cambridge University Conference on African Administration of 1946, cited in Nwankwo (2019) defined rural development as a movement to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and if possible, on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forth coming by the use of technique for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement... It includes the whole range of development activities in the districts, whether these are under

educational development. In addition, the major agents of rural development include community based organizations, nongovernmental organizations, community stakeholders and the governments. Also, lack of basic amenities, neglect/political marginalization, Inadequate community participation, Poor formulation and implementation of rural development policies, Inter/intra community conflicts, Lack of industrialization, corruption and poor economic programmes are the major challenges of rural development. The study concludes that the government can improve the standard of living in the rural communities through rural development. It was recommended that the rural community people should be involved in making and implementing rural development policies. Also, both federal, state and local governments should effectively implement rural development projects.

Key Words: rural development, agents of rural development, objectives of rural development, challenges of rural development, neglect/ political marginalization, community participation, and basic amenities.

taken by the Government or unofficial bodies (Abugu, 2014). As a process, it is seen as "a process of education by which people of all ages and all interests in the community learn to share their thought, their ideals, their aspirations, their joy and their sorrows in a large measure to mold and shape their communal destiny for themselves". It is a process of self discovery by which the people of a community learn to identify and solve their communal problems.

However, the focus of this work is on challenges of rural development in Nigeria which include lack of national philosophical base; poor formulation and implementation of rural development policies; lack of integrated pilot demonstration; neglect/political marginalization; low participatory; inadequate community participation; lack of spatial focus in rural development; lack of industrialization; lack of housing programmers; inter/intra community conflicts; economic problem: lack of basic amenities; poverty: lack of mechanized system of agriculture; corruption; and funding is a big challenge. Based on the foregoing, rural development could be achieved effectively when the Nigeria governments promote development in the rural communities. Such rural development could be achieved when the state government stop interfering in the political and administrative activities on the local government; when the local government receive their money directly from the federation account and promote internal generated revenue; when the local government officials are elected directly from the people and

play their functions positively; and when the local government political administrative officials and other stakeholders avoid corruption in performing their function and therefore play positive role in promoting human capital and infrastructural development at the rural community level.

About 70 percent of Africa's poor are rural and Nigeria's population is predominantly rural with rural communities' dwellers making up 70% of the total population (Ekwonna, 2014; Nwankwo, 2019). In Nigeria, recent estimate by the World Bank (2022) as cited in Ibe (2019) indicates that over 58 percent of the country's population live below the poverty line, do not enjoy good road network, good health care system, security and many other life benefits. For that, there are major gains to be made in reducing rural underdevelopment by focusing on development programmes. Many governments of Nigeria (and Imo State) in the past have engaged in rural development programmers, though many of them were not successful. These programmes had faulty backgrounds, no community involvement, riddled with corruption, no political will to do what is right and follow the programmes to a logical conclusion. In some cases the rural development efforts ended up enriching the political class with little or no benefit for the rural people.

Rural Development

Basically, rural development is a derivation of two main concepts: rural and development. For Ndoh (2015), rural entails an undeveloped village setting. Although defined in varying ways, rural development implies mutually related development activities and situations at the rural level. It is geared towards solving the problems of the community in order to raise their standard of living as well as promoting social welfare and development (Sanders, 1968). Rural development has also been viewed as an integrated rural development. It is a planned and determined effort of the government and other interested agencies alongside those of rural communities to cooperatively tackle rural development problems so as to improve and increase the per capita income and the welfare of the people (Alemoh, 2015). The integrated approach involves the provision of road, schools, water, electricity, etc. to encourage village youngster to stay at home, work on the land rather than rush to cities and increase the problems of over population, robbery, slum and so on (Ubah, 2016).

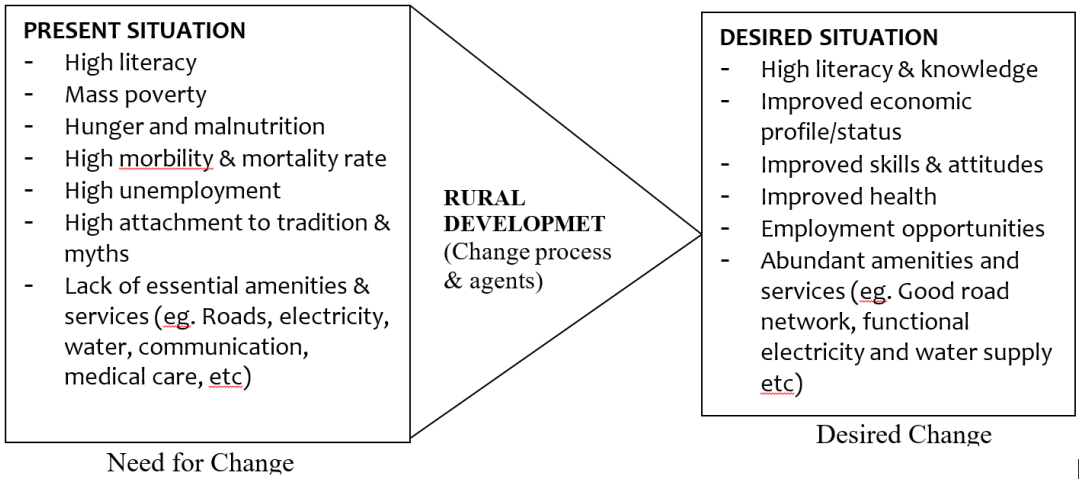
The process of rural development involves various activities from tackling of specific tasks on aspects of community welfare to multipurpose programmes aimed at the transformation of the social organization and values of the whole community. The

rationale is to ginger up individuals and make them act as a group, and develop their talents in order to solve welfare problems. It is conceived as a process, a method, a programme or a movement. Actually, it is viewed as a process in the life of the community by which the people plan and act together for the satisfaction of their felt needs. In the process, individuals are assisted to acquire the attitude, skills and knowledge needed to effectively participate in programme designed to promote their well-being (Tosin, 2012). Rural development strives to educate and motivate people for self help with a view to developing responsible local leadership among them, as well as inculcating in them a sense of citizenship and a spirit of civic consciousness (Anyanwu, 1981).

Oluseyi (2018), aver that rural development is actually focused on organized human and natural resources designed to provide solution to the perennial problems of poverty and deprivation of rural folks with a view of raising their living conditions. For rural development to work, there must be organize human and natural resources designed to provide a solution to the continuing problem of poverty and deprivation of rural people with the view to lifting them to a better state of life. For this to happen, both the human and natural resources in the rural areas have to be fully and meaningfully engaged. This is where the bottom-up and top-down approach of rural development comes in. Here, government has to be fully involved to motivate the rural. Ibe (2019) defined rural development as the improvement of the living standard of the people of low income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self-sustaining.

This means that the rural people had to be put on the path of development and then allowed to improve. Rural development here has to be self-sustaining, meaning that the people will continue where government and external supporters stopped. Rural development as summed from the above is a process that which empowers the local people for the improvement of their lives through enactment of policies, organization and application of principles, self-sustaining strategies and thoroughly the changes in the social and economic structures, institutions, and relationship among the people. These improvements of life are in the areas of qualitative healthcare, gainful employment, improved nutrition, good quality education, adequate security of life and property, improved income, etc. This makes rural development a participating process where the rural dwellers are involved in the decision-making process. The diagram below is a summary of the rural development process.

Fig.1: Rural Development Process



Source: Ibe, I.B (2019). Local government and rural development in Nigeria: Orlu LGA of Imo State. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 2(2):4-6.

Objective of Rural Development

The general objective of rural development as a social activity is to improve the well-being of rural development.

1. **Agricultural development:** Agricultural development is the process through which the government makes policies to enhance the growth of the agricultural sector of the economy for food security, employment and increase in foreign exchange. According to the Agricultural Council of Nigeria (2017), agricultural development is the synthesis of the framework and action plans of government design to achieve agricultural growth and development. Agricultural development goes a long way to effect domestic food, industrial value and great export frotentials because they can provide food for the entire population and income for farmers as well as many economic agents involved in marketing agricultural products (Olukunle, 2013). Some of the agricultural development policies made to enhance agricultural development in Nigerian are National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Agricultural Development Project (ADP), Green Revolution (GR), Better Life Programme (BLM), Iknola Nkuru, Imo Food Security Initiation (IFSI), Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and many others. The aim of these agricultural development programmes was to create food, employment, increase the income of rural dwellers and also to generate foreign revenue. Agriculture is the major occupation of rural people and the major enduring force of food for the people and raw material for industrial development.

2. **Job creation:** It is apparent that many rural dwellers are jobless: farming which is the main occupation in the rural areas has been left in the hand of the old people while the younger one migrated to urban areas in search of white-collar job (Onyekwelu, 2018). Creating jobs or employment in the rural areas will empower rural dwellers economically and reduce to a great extent the mass exodus of youths from the rural to the urban areas.
3. **Health development:** The provision of adequate health care to citizens has become a major concern in Nigeria (Onwuyiariri, Nwachi and Nkwocha 2017). In support to the above, Ibe (2019) affirm that rural development is therefore targeted at providing the rural people with effective reliable and affordable health service. When rural people have this access to quality healthcare, they will be healthy to carry out their daily activities and contribute meaningfully to the development of the Nation.
4. **Infrastructural development:** Infrastructural facilities provision helps for comfortable rural life, rural industrialization and reduction of rural- Urban migration by youth (Egbe, 2014). This is because through rural Infrastructural development, like portable water, electricity, good road network, effective communication facilities, rural life care improved.
5. **Industrialization:** Rural industrialization means the location and wealition of industries in the rural areas. This will help to create jobs, acquisition of skills, services, values, improved income and products for rural dwellers.
6. **Educational opportunities:** Education is the knowledge, enlightenment, skill acquisition and descent living. It equips one with the information through which one could conquer the world and situations. Direction dispels ignorance, eliminates diseases and fights poverty to stand still. Providing education for the rural populace would equip them with the knowledge and skill to change and better their life and environment (Nwarieji and Ifeanyieze, 2016). Educational opportunities in the rural areas will also help to remove superstition and position the local on the path of greatness and freedom from the belief that had held them bound for a long time.
7. **Comfortable life:** In recent times, the perspective about life in the rural areas has changed significantly. This is because people do not view life in the rural areas as life of poverty and pain, rather a normal life that one should live. Providing the necessary basic amenities, jobs, industrialization, Agriculture development, quality healthcare, etc. in rural societies will help to enhance comfortable or quality life (Ajaero 2013). With the introduction of agricultural development rural people will embark on large scale agriculture which will enhance their income and

eradicate poverty with its attendant provision of food and raw materials for industries.

Approaches to Rural Development

An approach is a means through which a particular goal is achieved. Rural development is not a haphazard affair and must be systematically executed through the global practices to garner the interest, support and participation of the people to achieve their overall development. Eze (2005) depicts rural development approaches as a procedure which utilizes some facilities associated with particular arrangement and management techniques to involve identifiable stakeholders in rural development. Approaches to rural development both geographical and subject matter scope, in community development projects; its application is basically because it has been developed from ideal rural environment variables and developed on basis of experience to involve indices, which could world in different ecological environment (Ibe, 2019). The approaches to rural development are as follows;

1. **Idealistic approach:** The idealistic approach is also known as activist or political approach. It focuses on mobilizing youths to participate in group social activities that would promote meaningful transformation in rural communities. The approach empowers and positions the youths for gainful participation in activities desired by the rural people contrary to engagements in crimes. Ibe (2019) affirms that the idealistic approach had often yielded development of useful programmes that bring about psychological, emotional and attitudinal reforms of young people in rural communities thereby making rural communities truly transformed.
2. **Social development approach:** The social development approach of rural development lays much emphasis on the integration of social and economic development programmes in conjunction with mass literacy for self management and political empowerment. Unlike the idealistic approach with focuses on youth mobilization and the social development approach emphasis on personal improvement as a channel for effective rural development. The approach improves personal qualities of individual members of a rural area rather than their material possession. This connotes that emphasis is on human capacity development at individual levels with the aim to make them develop integrally on all aspects of human life.
3. **Agriculture extension approach:** This approach basically combines both educational and motivational procedure to achieve rural community development to more productive economy from its traditional state. The approach utilizes basic extension principles to sensitize the rural people on the need to develop putting

in full gear, the process of decision making in rural development. Agricultural extension which is critical to successful agricultural transformation will help to educate rural people on their potentialities and the resources available and measures of contribution to rural development (Ladele, Igodan, Agunga & Fadairo, 2015). The approach tends to identify areas of agricultural research improvement and uses the information so gained to transfer basic knowledge to rural farmers in rural communities. This based on already existing structure to effect harmonization. The benefit of this approach is aimed on effecting Agricultural development which is a sine qua non to food security and National development. Agricultural extension normally prepares the local leadership to encourage participation among rural people. Engage meaningfully with their community development programmes. The above achievement of the agricultural development approach are made through understanding rural dynamics, involvement of social tools and cooperation with existing local leadership structure in order to motivate group perpetration for rural development (Eze & Igbokwe, 1997). This approach has inclined as a pragmatic approach to Development programme (ADP) as a most prominent extension agency with positive contributions to rural community development in Nigeria.

4. **Community work group approach:** This approach is an emerging social work methodological approach to rural development. It shifts from original concept to social work on individual method only. Thus it emerges as a result of shift in emphasis from individual approach to provision of community social service to groups basically because the welfare of groups would make more impact than individual in rural development (Ibe, 2019). This means that groups replace individual in the scheme of things in the rural community. One of the overriding gains of this approach is the aids and support received by the groups of this approach are utilized to achieve self-control and improve their standard of living commonly, so the approach is almost a communal approach involving every individual in the community as a group.
5. **Technological approach:** The technological approach to rural development emphasizes the transformation of facts of rural society especially the Agricultural sector. It is apparent that Agricultural practices in the rural areas are purely traditional. It is appealing though that the trend had not changed even this 21st century. This implies that there should be a shift from the use of local, farming implements to the use of semi-modern technology. This approach is completed entrusted to total orientation of the local people on the importance, need and use of modern technology in agriculture. This will go a long way to enhance

acceptability and usage. The technology approach advocate improved farming practices, improved seeding, storage system, insecticides, pesticides and fertilizers. Embracing the technological approach will lead to improvement in agricultural production.

Stages of Rural Development

In the words of Eze (2005) a variable rural development programmes follows definite stages of operation. These stages which are in sequence and guide the focus of a rural development includes; need assessment, the planning stage, prioritizing objective, deterring, resources, programme design, programmme implementation and evaluation. These stages are further explained below;

1. **Need assessment or inquiry stage:** Before any action is taken in the practice of rural development need assessment or inquiry must first be carried out. This is to identify the areas of need of the rural people and what could be done to solve that problem. This stage aims to obtain the necessary information about the areas and regarding their social and economic background, existing problems and felt needs as well as resources available within a rural community (Eze, 2005). The need assessment stage identifies the aspirations of members of the rural community, local leadership structure with their formal and informal grass root organizations. In identifying the problems, the team bears in mind that there are tangible and intangible problems prevalent among rural people. The tangible problems are the physical problems which are particularly visible e.g. poor road network, lack of electricity, poor health system, poor water supply, illiteracy, etc. while the intangible problems are the areas of marginalization in employment or sharing of national wealth, exploitation and degradation by local operating companies and many others. Identifying all these areas through tools like intentions, questionnaires, observation, focus group, photographs, interaction with rural people, recording, etc, will help chart the way for effective and progressive rural development.
2. **Planning stage:** Planning stage is very important in rural development. According to Ibegwam (2012), the manager without plan becomes victim of circumstances. Planning as solution of task or the method of organizing action. Also, Nosiri and Nwachukwu (2018) posit that planning means to determine objectives of the organization, examination of the environment and forecasting changes and development of policies, procedures and necessary plans to help achieve the objectives in view of changing environment. It is apparent therefore judging from the above definitions that planning is needed on rural development to organize

action, determine objectives, forecast charges and develop policy procedures and other pans are necessary to achieve the objectives with recourse to the environmental changes. The success of planning is dependent on the information received during the inquiry or need assessment stage. Here the planning must be specified or accurate to identify the actual objective of the rural development project. Planning takes care of all intended and unintended actions or issues which may arise during the implementation stage. It also embraces and positions all needed personnel like supervisions, monitoring team, rural charge agents, representative of rural groups and officials of other related agencies both governmental and non-governmental. Planning documents should be flexible and modifiable to accommodate important adjustments and basic charges for improvement. Finally, it should highlight the basic steps to be followed in the implementation of the project. This stage cold also referred to as objective selection stage.

3. **Prioritizing objectives:** After the planning or objective selection stage, there is the objectives prioritization stage. It makes for the carefully arrangement of the selected objectives in a logical order or according to priority based on the pressing nature of a particular problem or need (Obi, 2019).
4. **Determining resources:** Rural development is done with resource. The appropriate resources for the specific work or project to be done had to be carried out. Resources could be human and material. Human resources mean the personnel which could be experts, with unique skill which is mandatory for the actualization of the rural development project. On the other hand, material resources could be money, construction materials, etc.
5. **Programme design stage:** A design is a specification of an object or procedures, referring to requirements to be met for them to solve a problem. The rural developers or officials having determined the resources needed for the programme of action. This include how the resources would be utilized, dates of particular activities to be carried out, duties and functions of professionals should be easily understand and flexible too.
6. **The implementation stage:** The implementation stage means action taking stage. It is a very critical stage in rural development. It is also called the take off stage. The success gained at the implementation stage depends on availability and adequacy of resources, personnel and cooperation of the rural people. This stage requires strict compliance to time and plan of the project. However, changes or modification could take place because of the flexibility inherent in the programme

design, which must be well communicated to the relevant groups involved in the rural development project (Ajaero, 2013).

7. **Evaluation stage:** Programme evaluation is a process of a through which the projects of a rural development project is determined. It is carefully executed to ascertain how programme objectives have been carried out. Evaluation can be formative, stage by stage or summative. The formative involves the ongoing assessment of work done as the programme implementation progresses. The stage by stage evaluation is to determine work process in stage while the summative is the process where a fall evaluation is done at the completion of implementation. It is also known as terminal stage, which means it is at the end of the project. The planning process or stage gives room for adjustment where faults or mistakes are found for corrections. This process which is carried on until the project is totally complemented.

Agents of Rural Development

There are many agents of development. Ibe (2019) defines gents as these personals things and entitles that play active roles in bringing about and sustaining rural development. These agents initiate and sustain the process for the mutual benefits of the rural people. The agents of rural development are as follows.

a. Community based organizations

Farinda and Adisa (2005) described community based organizations as formal voluntary social groups that are found in the community, which differ widely in terms of their sizes and objectives. The importance of Community Based Organizations include that they facilitate access for the rural people to available services and inputs for agricultural development. Also, they provide the structure through which people can influence the direction and implementation of development (Farinda & Adisa, 2005). It has been argued by scholars that organizations based in the rural areas like the community based organizations are the best suited for rural development. Machethe (1995) argues that there is always the existence of incompatibility between different goals; and incompatibility between goals to achieve rural development. He further affirmed that differences of interest exist between national government and international organizations/agencies and that it is not always easy to reconcile these differences with those of the rural populations.

Chambers (2013) in conclusion asserted that rural peoples' knowledge is always often superior to that of outsider i.e. government and international agencies and as such, should be allowed to chart the course of their development. Ekong (2003) agreed that in recent times, community based organizations are being promoted by government, non-

governmental organizations and their agencies to actively participated in the development of their communities. This is because of the current realization that local people are rational and posses the right capabilities to sustain an indigenous based development strategy in sharp contrast to the failed economic and social strategy adopted since independence in many African countries. Also, the feature and nature of formal voluntary organizations according to Jibowo (2005) are:

1. Establishment of offices which are filled with offers through some established procedure, which not infrequently, is election.
2. Holding periodic meetings regularly on agreed upon dates and places.
3. Establishment of criteria for individuals to qualify as members.
4. Carrying out formalized activities through division of labour among members.
5. Having a constitution which governs operations.

Shepherd (1998) asserts that community development through local actions (such as Community Based Organization) offers itself as the most appropriate strategy for achieving sustainable rural development. Thus, community based organizations, which are mainly concerned with the execution of a wide range of projects geared forwards transforming their respective communities into the desired state, constitute veritable agents of rural development. According to Farinda and Adisa (2005), twelve types of community based organizations are categorized according to their composition and functions as follows;

1. Community Development Associations (CDAs);
2. Cooperative Societies;
3. Town/Village Improvement/Development Unions;
4. Occupational/Professional Associations;
5. Age Groups/Associations;
6. Youth Associations;
7. Trade and Commercial Associations;
8. Religions Organizations;
9. Gender Groups;
10. Indigenous Clubs/Societies;
11. Tribal or Ethnic Groups/Associations;
12. Other Local Groups.

b. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)

The term "non-governmental organization" or NGO was coined by the United Nations in 1945 because of the need to differentiate in its charter between participating rights for inter-governmental specialized agencies and these for international private organization

(Utuk, 2014). The term "non-Governmental organization" points organizations (i) not based on Government; and (ii) not created to earn profit. The terminology of an NGO varies itself: for example, in the United States they may be called "private voluntary organizations," and most African NGOs prefer to be called "voluntary development organizations (Enyioko, 2012) The term "non-Governmental organization are largely independent of Government and they are primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial purposes. In industrial nations, NGOs are private agencies that support international development; indigenous groups organized regionally nationally; and member-groups and charitable organizations that mobilize private funds for development. NGOs also include independent cooperatives, community associations, water-user societies, woman's groups and pastoral associations. Lastly, they also include citizen groups that raise awareness and influence policy (Enyioko, 2012).

Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) are defined as agencies set up by private citizens, foundations, church organizations, volunteer workers, etc; to tackle specific social problems and particularly the alleviation of poverty and administration of relief to the needy and deprived, war victims and refuges (Ibe, 2019). The underlying fact is that NGOS are not part of Government and so are free from Government influence. They carry out life changing programmes by solving societies social problems. In Ethiopia, NGOs activities assisted in reducing poverty incidence of nutritional diseases and in solving the problem of rural water management (Ibe, 2019). An NGO is also defined as an independence voluntary association of people acting together on a continuous basic, for some common purposes, other than achieving government office, making money or illegal activities (Utuk, 2014). This definition clearly indentified three basic characteristics of an NGO namely; non partisan, non project making and non involvement in illegal activities. Majorly, NGOs are problem solvers, life changers, peace makers, poverty removers, etc. NGOs also perform in areas like agriculture by providing information on innovations to rural communities. Some NGOs operating in Nigeria according to Ibe (2019) include,

- Nigeria International Rural Development Association of Nigeria (NRADO).
- Christian Rural Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN).
- Institute for Research and Change Advocate (IRCA);
- Nigeria Rural Extension service project (NIRESP);
- Nigeria Participatory Rural Appraisal Network (NIPRANET);
- Country women Association in Nigeria (COWAN);
- Nigeria Association of Women in Agricultural Development (NAWAN);
- Farmers Development Union (FADU);
- Diocesan Agricultural Development Project (DADPO);

- Oyop-SOGBO Catholic Diocesan Agricultural programme (OODAP);
- Rural Community programme of Ibadan Archdiocese;
- National Community Trust Fund (NCDTF);
- International Federation of Women Lawyers (IFDA);

Some international NGOs operating in Nigeria also include

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD):
- Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO);
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID); and many others.

Non-governmental Organizations play myriads of roles in the process of rural development and some of the roles according to Utuk (2014) area as follows;

1. **Community mobilization empowerment:** The NGOs was their community mobilization platform to mobilize communities informing their duties and the need to take their destinies in their own hands with the capacity to organize or manipulate their environment for their own end. This process makes for rural participation and through it a lot of communities have chartered the way forward for themselves and their future generation thereby achieving sustainable development.
2. **Gender awareness and participation:** It is apparent that women have been largely schemed out in the running of society and in other areas. NGOs have fought gallantly to create gender awareness and participation in recent times. With the activities of NGOs the world over, increasing awareness of women strength and ability have been recognized. Today, women occupy higher offices in national domain and private domain and this has lessened agitations in many quarters.
3. **Health programmes:** NGOs have embarked on free medical missions over the years to extend quality healthcare services to underserved communities (Onyenecho, Amazigo, Njepuome, Nwaorgu & Okeibunor, 2016). This has restored hope to many rural dwellers who according to Utuk (2014), had gone beyond the reach of qualitative healthcare. He stressed that NGOs like the Community Partner for Development and Hope Foundation, etc, had become the saving grace of many rural areas with efforts aimed at encouraging community mobilization for health development activities. In this quest therefore, they had developed many healthcare programmes for many communities and trained volunteers on many community problems to undertake baseline information and follow up on those who need medical care attention (Utuk, 2014).

4. **Micro credit scheme and poverty alleviation:** The recent times have witnessed a geometric increase in poverty levels of rural dwellers, and even urban residents for that matter. Job loss and endemic unemployment with no end in sight has increased hunger, beggarliness and hopelessness for the rural people. However, the timely responses of most NGOs in poverty alleviation has brought succor for the people. Through them, people are trained for skill acquisition and soft loans are given for entrepreneurial purposes. These have helped to increase the level of wealth creation, good life and national development both at the rural and national levels.
5. **Human right:** The role and impact of non-governmental organizations on human rights of the people cannot be over emphasized. NGOs timely intervene where and where there are identified cases of human right abuse. Today, governments both at national, state and local levels steer clear cases linked to human right abuse thereby supporting Utuk's assertion that the issues of development and democracy is being linked to human right issues because there can be no true economic and political advancement and political advancement without respect for human beings.
6. **HIV/AIDS and other tropical issues:** There is no gainsaying the fact the HIV/AIDS is a ravaging nations and societies. There are also in existence other topical issues which have defiled the efforts of some national government. However, the coming of NGOs have brought great relief to rural dwellers as most of these diseases especially HIV/AIDS have been matched with the force they deserved. It can truly be said that NGOs are that the forefront of fighting the endemic HIV/AIDS. They have done this through various workshops, seminars, symposiums, media campaign, etc. They have also provided free test and free treatment. They have also been involved in the eradication of topical issues like child abuse, early marriage, human trafficking and prostitution, child labour, etc with a view to creating awareness of policy makers to the plight and consequences of these social maladies (Utuk, 2014).

Challenges of Rural Development Efforts

Many rural development efforts at all levels are facing some challenges (Obi, 2019). It is obvious that a lot of money and time have been committed to rural development in Nigeria, yet the well-being of rural dwellers are yet to be improved. One would have thought that with all the amount of energy expended to rural development, that the story could have been different unfortunately, this is not so. At one time or the other, efforts to achieve rural development have proved abortive. This is because of certain factors that

have remained as a cog in the wheel of rural development in Nigeria. These disturbing factors are called problems of rural development and they are discussed as follows;

1. **Lack of basic amenities:** Rural areas lack basic amenities like electricity, good road, network, pipe borne water, etc. good road network helps the rural people have access to the outside world, it enhances their interaction with people outside and also helps them to convey their agricultural produce to the urban markets (Nwarieji & Ifeanyieze, 2016). Electricity provision will help them to have access to information, attract industrialization and dissuade rural-urban migration while provision of pipe borne water will stop water borne diseases and give good healthy. Unfortunately, these are a mirage to local people as they are far from receiving these goodies. Infrastructural facilities are the facilities that help to support and make life easy and meaningful (Egbe, 2014). One could imagine where there is light, water, healthcare and communication constantly without any form of interruption, life will be highly enjoyable. But all these are lacking in most of Nigeria's rural societies. It is regrettable that up to this 21st century, some Nigerian rural society has not received electricity.
2. **Neglect/political marginalization:** The neglect of rural areas have remained from the colonial times thereby setting back rural development. Many rural areas are been threatened by erosion, acute water shortage, etc, but unfortunately, there have not been attended to, even though the cries of rural dwellers have reached the highest Heavens (Ibe, 2019). In Nigeria today, many rural areas are neglected and marginalized because they are from a particular section of the country or state e.g. South Eastern Nigeria and Emenbiam Autonomous Community in Imo State.
3. **Inadequate community participation:** Rural development in Nigeria is characterized by inadequate participation rural people (Egbe, 2014). This is because most times, Government employs the top-bottom approach which does not give rural dwellers the opportunity fully operates in rural development activities. In Nigeria, there has been poor participation of the people in rural areas on the nature of rural development needed (Uhegbu, 2017). This is mainly an imposition from government and other stakeholders. Advocates of rural development in recent times have maintained after various studies and attempts that rural participation is paramount to the attainment of sustainable rural development. This is because there is no real development without the involvement of its beneficiaries. In facts, it is justifiable that rural people identify their areas of felt need and fully involved in the precepts of its implementation. Participatory rural development the active involvement of communities in need

assessment determination of priorities, planning and execution of projects. It also refers to the contribution of potential beneficiaries to the realization of project for their own development (Mansuri & Rao, 2004 cited in Nwachukwu & Eze, 2007). This incisive approach draws the attention of rural people and elicits the drive to commit themselves to the activities that would lift their lives from poverty. It is said that participation as an article of faith of rural development is a fundamental principle for any successful project or programme and the single most important key to improving the livelihood of the world's poor (Karmar, Lawal, Babangida & Jahum, 2014). In their own contribution to the meaning of participation, Bappi, Singh and Dahiru (2018; P.54) define participation as an active process in which the participants take imitratries and actions that are stimulated by their own thinking and deliberation over which they exert effective control. Participation could also mean that societies are allowed to have direct and final control in taking control concerning their affairs. This makes the people have full responsibility for management of their problems. In their own perspective, the United Nations (2005) observed community participation as a means of society to actively participate in the development process, to influence it and to live up to the finite of development. Suppressed by, it is not all about the involvement of the rural dwellers in the development process but they must as a matter of necessity partake in the fruits thereof.

4. **Poor formulation and implementation of rural development policies:** Apart from the lack of national philosophical base of rural development programmes, rural development has also suffered from poor policy formulation and implementation result from incomplete policy thought – through or ineffective implementation policy prescribed programmes to result and (Ofana, Effefion & Omini, 2016) This is because policy makers in Nigeria seen rather to be in a hurry that they do not take seriously the information process of policies. Policies also fail because of the inability of the policy makers to carry out feasibility study at the formation stage. Feasibility study entails research, while research and study must be carefully carried out by the bureaucrats or consultant firms before a policy is finally made and launched (Tumbari, 2014). Most rural societies in Nigeria lack the funds to face their challenges themselves. They lack funds to construct their roads, build their hospitals, construct classroom blocks, buy fertilizer, insecticides, seeds etc. All these hinder their productivity.
5. **Inter/intra community conflicts:** Inter/intra community conflicts are political factors that have bedeviled rural areas in Nigeria. This ugly trend have left many lives lost as many are maimed and property worth millions of naira destroyed as

an outcome of inter and intra community conflicts (Ibe, 2019). Inter community conflict is a clash between one community and another, while intra community conflict is a clash among members of the same community. Inter and intra community conflicts are caused by struggles over farm lands, traditional ruler ship tussle, sharing of royalties from companies operating in the rural communities, secret cult supremacy, etc. many lives were lost in the intra community conflicts in Awara and Assa in Ohaji Epbera LGA of Imo State in 2018 (Obi, 2019). For the past two decades, many rural societies have witnessed series of communal conflicts. Most of these conflicts are caused by Ezeship tussles, land tussles, cult clashes over supremacy, etc. This ugly trend has waged down the development of the rural society.

6. **Lack of national philosophical base:** Rural development in Nigeria lacked a philosophical, ideological and holistic foundation. This implies that rural dwellers are not given time to be part of the decision that would improve their well being. All policy makers do as to sit in their cozy offices and dish out policies for rural development. Unfortunately most of these policies fail because they lacked that philosophical super structure that could make them viable and successful. Nwasiu calls it lack of institutional base (Nwasiu, 2014). A philosophical base is typified by an internal motivating and compelling force or commitment stemming from faith and love for the sapiens (human) in the rural sector and determination to work for their upliftment (Oluseyi, 2018).
7. **Lack of integrated pilot demonstration:** Commenting on the uncertainty of government effort to place rural development in its development strategies, Oluseyi (2018) argues that government had us define rural development governance before 1976. He rather observed that what was in vogue was segmented or unco-ordianted rural development where it is assumed that new programmes in one community will have ripple effects on other communities and institutions (Oluseyi, 2018). The first Department of Rural Development at federal level was established in 1976 to mobilize people, initiate local projects with local leadership, promotes agriculture, rural development and community projects.
8. **Lack of industrialization:** The world today is in the era of industrialization and globalization. Unfortunately, Nigeria rural areas have not appropriated this modern trend as most of them have deficiency in industrial development. There are many natural resources found in the rural areas but these resources are taken to the cities for processing because there are no industries to process them in the rural areas (Ibe, 2019). Also investors both foreign and local find it difficult to invest in the rural areas because most industries are already concentrated in the

urban areas. This has not helped matters but has rather encouraged rural-urban migration thereby imprisoning the rural people.

9. **Lack of housing programmes:** The problem of housing abounds in rural areas. This is one of the reasons the rural areas has remained undeveloped till date. Most people who work for Government in rural areas live in town (Uhegbu, 2017). This is because they don't find good houses to live in the rural areas. Unfortunately, most low cost schemes embarked by Government are concentrated in the cities than the rural areas that need them most. Although successive Nigeria Governments have initiated programmes for rural development but most of these programmes were poorly executed.
10. **Economic problem:** There are many economic problems that have hindered communities (Nosiri & Nwachukwu, 2018). Some of them are poverty, unemployment, half-employment, inadequate wages, land tenure system, and many more (Onyekwelu, 2018). Poverty means deprivation, many rural people are deprived of basic food intake, clothing, shelter, etc. also they are not gainfully employed and where some are employed, they are half-employed in the sense that their current employment is not enough to take of their daily necessities. They also face old age and sickness.
11. **Poverty:** Poverty is a state of deprivation of basic elements necessary for human survival in the society Nwarieji and Ifeanyieze (2016). the deprivation include clean water, good healthcare, quality education, quality food, good shelter, civil liberty, natural right, constant electricity, etc. The absence of all these constitute poverty.
12. **Lack of mechanized system of agriculture:** Agriculture is still bereft of improved or mechanized agriculture: Although agriculture is the predominant occupation of rural dwellers, it is appalling that it is done in a crude manner even in the 21st century. Hoes, cutlass, spades and ordinary bare hands are still used in agricultural activities. This has contributed to the failure of agriculture as an agent of rural and natural development because this way, it could not produce enough food for the mass consumption of the people and the required raw materials for industries.
13. **Corruption:** In his treatise about the menace of corruption to national development, Okonkwo (2009) posit that corruption is the biggest obstacle to the development and growth of Nigeria rural society. Corruption is responsible for lack of development in the rural society, so that funds provided for its development are diverted to private use (Ibe, 2019). Subsequent Nigeria Government have set up various rural development programmes but all of them failed because those in Government channeled the funds made for such projects

for their personal gains thereby leaving the rural community continually impoverished.

14. **Funding is a big challenge:** The challenge of funding has hindered rural development. The people of different rural areas do not effectively fund the development of their communities. The local and state governments do not effectively finance rural development programmers (Nnamocha, 2002:104). More so, over reliance on statutory allocation by some local governments which leads to a neglect or exploitation of the internal sources of revenue is a major challenge. This is a problem as it has made rural communities to remain where they are.

Empirical Review

This topic is not new; hence some researchers have been done in related areas.

Onoh (2015) examined the role of local government in community development in Nigeria using Udi local government Area of Enugu State as the focal point (1999 – 2007). The study was carried out to examine to determine the contribution of local government in community development. Based on that, the researcher formulated three research objectives, three research questions and two hypotheses. The researcher utilized only secondary sources of data and system theory was also employed for the study. Based on literature work consulted, it was discovered that local government can play positive role in promoting rural infrastructure and human development at the community level; but the problem of inadequate finance, state government interferences and lack of proper orientations and corruption are problems hindering the local government from playing their functions well. He therefore concludes that the stability and growth of Nigerian communities depends on the roles of the local government. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the state government should allow the local government to perform its functions well by conducting local government elections as that will lead to community development; and the local government administrations and leaders should pay attention in rural road maintenance, provision of pipe borne water and human development training.

Ozoemenam (2019) focused on the role of women in rural development using Nkwere autonomous community as the focal point. The study was carried out based on neglect of women in rural development. The objective of the study focused on the relationship between socio-economic status of women and their contributions in rural development, impact of educational training for woman development and areas which women have contributed in rural development. Based on the above, three research questions and two hypotheses. Descriptive survey research design was used and questionnaire served as the instrument of data collection. The people of Nkwere autonomous community made up

the population, from where 180 persons were sampled using purposive sampling technique. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed using simple percentage and the hypotheses were tested using chi-square. The researcher used social responsibility theory and system theory to analyzed the subject matter. Based on the data analysis, the findings revealed that there is significant relationship between socio-economic status of women and contribution in rural development, there is significant impact of educational empowerment on women contribution to rural development and that women have significantly contributed in building of health centres, town hall and training of their children. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the Nigerian government should be empower women through educational and technical training to enable contribute significantly in community development; and the Nigerian government should pragmatically implement the 35% affirmative action which will promote effective women representation in political, economic and social life in Nigeria.

Ibe (2019) analyzed local government and rural development in Nigeria using Orlu LGA of Imo State as the focal point. Based on that, the researcher formulated and used four research objectives, four research questions and two research hypotheses. The researcher therefore employed descriptive survey research design for the study and questionnaires were used as the instrument of data collection. Out of the 200 questionnaire distributed, only 194 were returned and used. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and frequencies, the hypotheses were tested using chi-square. The findings revealed that Orlu local government is playing significant role in service delivery through road maintenance, electrification and human capital development. But the problem of political interferences, low level of finance, inability of the community members to pay their taxes, inability of the state government to conduct local government election, lack of effective internally generated revenue and problem of corruption are the major challenges affecting Orlu local government area in their service delivery efforts. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that the both federal and state governments should be constitutionally restrained from interfering within constitutional powers of the local government for effective service delivery; political and administrative leaders at the Orlu local government council should be effectively trained so that they can know the strategies to be employed in enhancing electrification, road maintenance and other aspects of service delivery; and community development through Orlu L.G.A should be made more practical and functional. Here, different communities, age grades, town unions and all progressive associations should always organize a meeting, discuss and identify some developmental problems of the area and look for ways to solving such problems. The people of Orlu Local Government Area should promote the

four tiers of government of the state government as that will encourage infrastructure and community development in the local government area.

Nwarieji and Ifeanyieze (2016) focused on challenges associated with the implementation of unified agricultural extension Services (UAES) programme in Imo State. Specific objectives were to determine the administrative, financial and logistic challenges associated with the implementation of UAES programme. Three research questions guided the study. Null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance. The study adopted survey (descriptive) design and was conducted in Imo State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 22,988 comprising of 22,880 farmers and 108 extension agents in the study area. Total samples of 336 were used consisting of 226 contact farmers and 108 extension agents. The instrument for data collection was Structured Questionnaire complemented by the Focused Group Discussion (FGD) guide. The questionnaire comprised items arranged in clusters. The instrument was face validated by five experts and the internal consistency of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha method which yielded the reliability coefficients of 0.70. The instruments were administered through personal contacts with the help of six assistants. The data was analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. Information collected from the focused group discussion was qualitatively analyzed. The findings of the study revealed that Administrative constraints include inadequate market for disposing farm produce, poor coordination of activities of farmers, inadequate training of extension staff; Financial constraints include high cost of adoption of technology, inadequate finance; and Logistics constraints include low level of education, use of traditional implements were the challenges associated with implementation of UAES programme. Based on the findings of the study, conclusions were drawn and recommendations made which include among others the need for adequate provision of agricultural inputs at a subsidized rate and training of extension agents for effective implementation of UAES programme in order sustain agricultural production in Imo State, Nigeria.

Odalonu (2015) examined the challenges confronting local government administration in effective and efficient social service delivery for rural development at the grassroots. Secondary data formed the basis of data collection, interpretation and analysis. Data was collected through a comprehensive review of relevant literature on the subject of inquiry. The thrust of analysis was systematically prosecuted under select themes and sub-themes designed to address the salient aspects of the paper's objective. The paper identified lack of funds, corruption, and undue political interference amongst others as major constraints to local government service delivery for rural development. The paper provided some measures to ensure efficient and effective social service delivery at the local level so as to enhance rural development. Such measures include constitutional

reforms to ensure total autonomy of local government, enhance revenue allocation, capacity and institutional building that produce the human capital that is committed to the principles of good governance at local level. The paper concludes that if the above measures are employed, local governments in Nigeria would improve in the provision of essential social services to the people at the local level.

Theoretical Framework

The relevance of theory in political science and development studies research cannot be overemphasized. That is why Ugwulebo (2003; p.38) observed that:

> …situations usually warrant the engineering of theories. Such theories are necessary in offering explanations to issues and more often than not, rationalize given situations and actions. Theories are not alien to the behavioural and social sciences and even the entire academic disciplines. There are surfeit of them. Each theory has its own postulations, ends to serve, interpretation of reality, basic components and of course, observable conclusion.

In this study, the researcher used two theories. They are the structural functional theory and Vacuum-Filling Theory.

The Structural Functional Theory

Gabriel Almond and his associate in 1954 developed the structural functional theory. Almond focused on identification of functions of the polity in modern western system and how these functions are performed in non-western systems in the process of modernization (Unanka, 2004). This theory holds that all the system in a society have structures or institutions and these structures or institutions have functions to perform for the survival of the society. Therefore, all political systems have structures which they must perform certain task in order to achieve equilibrium. According to Ekwonna (2014) "the objective concern of structural functionalism is to identify which structures constitute which system, which structures perform which functions, and which functions impact on the system as a result of the relationship it creates with the structure and the rest of the structures in the system."

According to Varma (1975), structural functional analysis revolves around certain concepts more important of which are: functions and structures. In using structural functional analysis, three basic questions are usually asked, namely: (a) What basic functions are fulfilled in any given system, (b) By what structures and (c) Under what conditions?

The basic assumptions of this theory include:

1. All system has structures which can be identified and these structures have certain functions to perform.
2. The broad aims and principles underlying a social structure can be identified
3. There is an interconnection between the parts of the society and tensions are resolved by the parts working together.
4. The society serves as a single interconnected system where each structure performs certain functions and interacts with each other to achieve maintenance of equilibrium (Sharma 1984 and Johari 1983 cited in Ekwonna, 2014).

The relevance of this theory to this work is to guide us to explain the activities of government as a structure in Imo State political system towards the development and maintenance of survival of the communities in Imo State. The use of structural functional theory as the framework of analysis is based on its suitability for this study. The community government council is seen as a sub structure in Imo State political system with the aim to achieve development, ensure community participation and preservation of cultural values. And the failure of government to perform its function will automatically undermine the survival of the Imo State political system. The formation of government in Imo State shows that the Administration does not have the desire to bring government structure at the door step of the people, so as to perform development functions and achieve rural development objectives.

Conclusion

Rural development has a long history in Nigeria. It dates back to pre-colonial Nigeria when rural communities initiated and implemented their own development projects with little or no external assistance. Traditional communities depended largely on self help. They initiated development projects to meet their communal felt needs. In traditional Nigeria, rural development was often known as community development. Development is a process of inclusion where people are allowed to meet their own aspirations. For that, rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of rural dwellers. In the traditional Igbo society of Nigeria, rural development was an undertaken that involved all in the society (the elderly, the women, the umuada and the youths, and the age grades). This study concludes that the government can improve the standard of living in the rural communities through rural development.

The Way Forward

Based on the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should avoid marginalization and carry all communities along in its rural development effects.
2. The rural community people should be involved in making and implementing rural development policies.
3. Infrastructural development in the rural areas like road construction, building of schools, and provision of water, building of market and parks and electrification should all be encouraged by the state and local government authorities.

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