

AFRREV IJAH

An International Journal of Arts and Humanities

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Vol. 3 (2), S/No 10, April, 2014:104-119

ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)

Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v3i2.7>

**Implementation Issues in Rural Development in
Sub-Saharan African Countries: Problems and
Prospects**

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Abstract

It is a credo amongst scholars cum academics all over the globe that well coordinated and elaborate programmes and policies of rural development mounted by the third world countries in sub-Saharan Africa will lift her entire citizenry from manacle of gross

underdevelopment to a region of development in all facets of their economies. The countries in sub-Saharan African have spent trillions of dollars in rural development sector but an overview of the economies of these countries show that the vast population are marooned and encapsulated in gross poverty, ignorance, and underdevelopment. The reason is attributable to poor implementation of rural development policies and programmes coupled with a host of variegated factors. This paper therefore defines the concept of implementation and rural development. The authors of this paper adopt the modernization theory to explicate the work. It discusses the significance of rural development to the economies of Sub-Saharan African countries. The paper also explains how poor implementation of rural development programmes affects these countries. Moreover, it orchestrates the factors/problems that impede rural development drives of various governments in Sub-Saharan African. Furthermore, it elucidates on the prospects of rural development. The paper finally suggests that an effective implementation of rural development programmes in all ramifications is the only vehicle for rapid growth and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Introduction

The centrality of effective implementation of rural development policy and programmes as a pedestal for the development of the Sub-Saharan African nations has occupied the front burner in the discourse amongst scholars, academics, public administrators. Hence the issue has received wide attention (Okosun and Urhoghode, 2013). A macroscopic view of the political and economic theatre of the West African nations will bring to limelight that the implementation of their rural development policies and programmes had hiccups. This is due to the poor implementation of programmes by various governments which is occasioned by a host of variegated factors such as corruption, inadequate legal framework, etc. Scholars have therefore suggested the implementation of rural development policies and programmes as a launching pad for the overall sustainable development of the economies of West African nations.

According to Egonwan, (1991),

The implementation of rural development policy and programmes has been described as one of the problem confronting the developing countries (Sub-Saharan African nations inclusive). In relativity, the successful implemental of rural development policy is difficult in first world countries. It is even more difficult in the third world, and may be most difficult in reform oriented government in the third world such as Africa and Latin America (Mcclintock, 1980).

From the foregoing, it is evident that poor implementation of rural development policies and programmes is the hallmark and a reoccurring decimal in West African sub region. If these countries are to witness social and economic development, proper implementation of rural development policies must be reinvigorated and given a pride of place.

Given the above scenario, the paper reviews the germane issues in the implementation of rural development in Sub-Saharan African countries. The paper is divided into sections starting with an introduction which x-rayed the concept of implementation of rural development and also presents the theoretical framework. The authors explicated this paper with the aid of modernization theory. The third section examines the problems and prospects of rural development in Sub Sahara Africa countries. It ends with a conclusion.

Conceptual Clarification

Implementation

There are various definitions of the concept of implementation. According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), “implementation refers to the process of converting imputes-financial, information, men, materials, technical, human demand, support etc into outputs – goods and services including symbolic values”. A synthesis of this definition will reveal that implementation include those actions or inactions of

government which are designed and carried out with the sole aim of bettering the lots of her citizenry. These actions could be within the arena of distributive policies, non distributive or symbolic policies, such as the provision of pipe borne water, irrigation works, construction of dams and dykes (Oronsaye 1998). Implementation has the attribute of ambience. Implementation of policies is ecologically laden. What this mean is that various governments, be it central, state or local government of countries in Sub-Saharan African such as Nigeria, Republic of Benin, Togo, Ghana etc carryout policies and programmes in their environment. This environment is located within their territorial boundaries. According to Egonwan (2000),

implementation is where the earlier preparation and designs, plans and analysis are tested in the harsh reality and where policy content and the impact of people could be substantially altered or even negated by the political and administrative process.

A cursory look at the above definition explains in totality what implementation entails from the principle of stages strand. Here all the decisions and actions of the various government officials “who are clothed with office” is brought out from the formulation and design state to testing it in the environment (be it community, state or local government). In the course of implementing government programmes, there could be alterations of the programmes by officials to suit their whims and caprices or unintended consequences of such policies may stream in. Simply input, implementation entails a process of moving forward a policy objective by means of administrative and political step (Egonwan, 2000).

DeGroff and Cargo (2009), see “policy implementation as a complete change process where government decisions are transformed into programmes, procedures, regulations or practices aimed at social betterment”. This definition synchronizes with the earlier definition of Pressman and Wildavsky. Both definitions stress the public goods and services provided by government which are aimed at ameliorating the living conditions of the vast majority of the population living in a

particular nation state or country. The policy process represents a heuristic one for public study and has been conceptualized as including the following steps (1) agenda setting, (2) issue definition, (3) policy formulation, (4) policy decision and (5) policy implementation evaluation and feedback (Amy and Cargo, 2009).

Rural Development

There are a plethora of definitions of the concept of rural development (Okosun Victor 2012). Idemudia (1999) opined that it is difficult to give an accurate and precise definition of the concept. Some scholars use the term rural development with the “prefix” ‘integrated’, while others use the concept ‘rural development’. Whatever the case, the two concepts refer to the same thing.

Malcolm (2003) postulated that rural development

refers to the process of improving the quality of life and economic well bang of the people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. Rural development has traditionally centred on the exploitation of land resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, changes in global production network and increased urbanization have changed the character of the rural areas.

From the above definition, Malcom sees rural development as those policies and programmes (which are eclectic in nature) that are implemented by various governments in Sub-Saharan African nations. Such programmes include the establishment of institutional and social infrastructures (Idachaba, 1986). The essence of establishing these programmes is to improve the economic well being and standard of living of the rural inhabitants.

James et al (2005) contended that “rural development is all about organization and people with a particular vested interest in a particular place working in partnership to achieve a shared aspirant and objective through actions”. From this definition, one can deduce that

rural development include those multisectoral or multidimensional programmes aimed at lifting the rural dwellers from the fetters and manacle of poverty, deprivation etc. If the above observation is to take root in Sub-Saharan African nations like Ghana, Mali, Nigeria etc., the government of these nations must as a matter of urgency embrace policies and programmes of rural development (Okosun and Urhoghide, 2012).

According to Idachaba (1999), integrated rural development is a vehicle for increasing the food and nutritional needs of the nation. Every individual of any nation needs food to survive. In the view of Okosun (2009), Nigerians irrespective of the strata one belongs, has need for survival (Okosun, 2009). However, it is sad to note that the rural peasant farmers in Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries are unable to meet the food requirement for survival. This is as a result of the problems bedeviling agricultural practices in the region. These include the following: the use of crude implements such as hoes, cutlasses, fixed land asset, declining productivity, low capacity utilization of farm produce and inadequate distribution of concentrates (Olayinde, 1972).

The inability of the rural farmers to meet the food requirement of Nigerians led to the massive importation of all classes of food by the various tiers of government, despite having invested trillions of dollars in the agricultural sector. It is sad to note that prices of food in these countries rose astronomically (World Bank, 1995), for instance in Nigeria, the richest and largest populated country in Sub-Saharan African prices of food has ascended a higher crescendo from 1970-2005 as shown in table 1 below.

Agricultural Sector: Expenditure and Price Indices 1970-2005

| Year | Govt. Capital Expenditure on Agric | Govt. Recurrent Expenditure on Agric | Foreign Investment on Agric | Index of Agric Production (1984=100) | Fo0d Price Index Composite (1985=100) | World Price index of Nigerian Agric Commodities (1985=100) |
|------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1970 | 5.6 | 4.4 | 11.2 | 126 | 9.0 | 36 |
| 1971 | 8.6 | 4.3 | 15.4 | 114.2 | 11.6 | 30 |
| 1972 | 20.7 | 12.4 | 9.4 | 94 | 11.8 | 32 |
| 1973 | 35.4 | 13.4 | 7.9 | 102.2 | 12.2 | 47 |
| 1974 | 87.4 | 24.6 | 20.7 | 118.7 | 14.1 | 66 |
| 1975 | 211.2 | 38.8 | 19.2 | 104.3 | 20.1 | 49 |
| 1976 | 129.2 | 18.5 | 21.9 | 97.6 | 24.5 | 58 |
| 1977 | 105.2 | 19.5 | 75.0 | 96.7 | 29.3 | 88 |
| 1978 | 128.4 | 19.7 | 117.6 | 93.5 | 34.5 | 86 |
| 1979 | 321.9 | 34.3 | 120.8 | 92.4 | 37.3 | 90 |
| 1980 | 435.6 | 32.2 | 120.5 | 92.5 | 40.1 | 65 |
| 1981 | 775.1 | 33.9 | 120.5 | 95.2 | 50.2 | 64 |
| 1982 | 1035.1 | 34.1 | 120.5 | 98.3 | 54.6 | 56 |
| 1983 | 1185.2 | 29.3 | 127.8 | 93.9 | 67.3 | 88 |
| 1984 | 252.5 | 32.8 | 128.5 | 100 | 96.2 | 113 |
| 1985 | 985.4 | 32.7 | 126.0 | 104.6 | 100.0 | 100 |
| 1986 | 892.5 | 32.9 | 128.2 | 108.3 | 100.1 | 151 |
| 1987 | 365.1 | 29.2 | 117.3 | 116.1 | 108.7 | 406 |
| 1988 | 595.7 | 54.3 | 128.9 | 138.5 | 195.3 | 456 |
| 1989 | 981.5 | 81.1 | 134.8 | 153 | 298.1 | 577 |
| 1990 | 1758.5 | 208.1 | 334.7 | 167.5 | 308.0 | 646 |
| 1991 | 551.2 | 121.1 | 382.8 | 191.7 | 345.9 | 568 |
| 1992 | 763.0 | 161.5 | 386.4 | 206.4 | 506.8 | 918 |
| 1993 | 1820.0 | 1015.3 | 1214.9 | 211.4 | 800.2 | 1247 |
| 1994 | 2800.1 | 919 | 1208.5 | 209.7 | 1174.6 | 1519 |
| 1995 | 4691.7 | 2236 | 1209.0 | 216.8 | 2017.7 | 5227 |
| 1996 | 3892.8 | 1681.2 | 1209.0 | 224.8 | 2646.7 | 5866.3 |
| 1997 | 6247.4 | 1682.2 | 1290.0 | 234.1 | 2864.2 | 6083.5 |
| 1998 | 8876.6 | 2963.8 | 1209.0 | 242.4 | 3044.4 | 27762.4 |
| 1999 | 6912.6 | 31347.2 | 1209.0 | 249.1 | 3074.6 | 5277.1 |
| 2000 | 5761.7 | 4834.7 | 1290.0 | 249.9 | 3148.8 | 4241.4 |
| 2001 | 57879.0 | 7064.9 | 1209.0 | 257.4 | 4031.1 | 5640.8 |
| 2002 | 32364.4 | 12439.4 | 1209.0 | 264.9 | 4497.1 | 9684.6 |
| 2003 | 8510.9 | 7534.3 | 1290.0 | 278.9 | 4832.7 | 9442.8 |
| 2004 | 48047.8 | 11725.6 | 1209.0 | 253.8 | 5595.3 | 8261.0 |
| 2005 | 79939.4 | 10858.8 | 1209.0 | 269.8 | 6819.9 | 7881.9 |

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) 1995, Economic and Financial Review Vol. 33. No. 1

From the above table, it can be seen that in 1970, ten years after Nigeria attained her independence, the government's capital expenditure on agriculture was 5.6, and recurrent expenditure on agriculture was 4.1, while foreign investment on agriculture was 11.2. In the same year (1970), the index of agric production was 126, food price index 9.0, while the world price index of Nigeria agriculture commodities was 36. This figure rose astronomically in 2005. Nigeria spent 79939.4 on capital expenditure on agriculture, the recurrent expenditure on agriculture as 10858.8, while foreign investment on agricultural produce was 269.8, while food price index composite was 6819.9. Lastly, the world price index of Nigerian commodities was 7881.9. To ameliorate the composite index of prices of goods which has risen in geometric progression, the federal government decided to initiate and execute policies and programmes of integrated rural development (Okosun, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Theories are the building block of social sciences (Issak 1976) such as public administration, economics etc. Theories help in our understanding, explanation of rural development. The paper will be explicated with the aid of modernization theory.

Modernization Theory

Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia citing Malcom (2003) states that “the modernization theory is a theory used to explain the process of “modernization” within societies; modernization refers to a model of a progressive transition from a pre-modern or traditional to a modern societies. The theory looks at the internal factors of a country while assuming that with assistance, traditional countries can be brought to development in the same manner more developed countries have”.

The modernization theory was first utilized by Condorcet. He opined that there is a linkage between economic, social and cultural development. He stressed that traditional, primitive societies and nations should embrace education, technology and industrialization as a leeway out of their economic woods. In this breath, the less

developed nations' inhabitants will be able to gain full control of their environment (Wikipedia, 2003).

The modernization theory further gained currency in the 1940s up to the mid 1960s. The main emphasis of the western scholars is that for the underdeveloped third world nations of Africa, Latin America, Asia to be lifted from the shackles and fetters of underdevelopment the countries must embrace the modernization theory. The scholars postulated that with increasing modernization, urbanization, secularization, education, mass media vocational training, free enterprise, social mobility, independent judiciary... The third world countries would acquire sudden leap to modernity" (Verma 1975). The third world nations were expected to be copy-cats of western nations if they are to witness rapid development and growth (Offiong, 1980).

In the application of the modernization theory to rural development in Sub-Saharan Africa, the countries or nations located in the sub-region do not need to go through all the stages of development as posited by Walt Rostow (1965). What these underdeveloped nations need to do is to apply "proximal intervention" either directly by the federal, state or local government or through interventionist agency to the target rural economies (Marcos 2007). This must involve the public officials who must make sure that the programmes and policies designed get to the communities where the rural inhabitants reside. When this is done, the standard of living of the rural populace or inhabitants living in these nations will increase.

Modernization theory implemented in all ramifications in third world nations has produced defects. These defects are in form of criticisms. The theory has been heavily criticized by scholars. The scholars such as Offiong (1980) contended that the modernization theory is Eurocentric in nature. What this portends is that the modernization theory harps on the need for the third world nations to jettison their culture, traditions etc (which are regarded as barbaric and uncivilized and embrace the western culture (Brugger and Hannan 2008). Moreover, the modernization theory has also been criticised by scholars

as being one sided. It tends to overlook the externalities that are instrumental to changes in given societies (Wikipedia 2012).

Implementation of Rural Development Programmes: An Albatross

According to Okafor and Onekhoraye (1996), Africa nations' efforts to implement various policies and programmes of rural development have been plagued by variegated factors. These factors to them are interwoven and intertwined. This view synchronizes with the postulation of Iyoha (2006) who contended that the factors bedevilling rural development stood as albatross to Sub-Saharan Africa countries' quest for rapid development of their economies. At this juncture, let us pause to examine these constraints.

a) Poverty

Poverty is one of the factors bedevilling the implementation of rural development policies in Sub-Saharan countries. Relative and absolute poverty are present in these countries. Using the World Bank benchmark of one dollar per day, over 50 percent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa fell below this poverty line with Mali 72.8%, Nigeria 70.2%, and Ghana 60% (Embong, 2005). Poverty inhibits, to a large extent, development of the rural areas. Poverty breeds leakages in government policies and programmes. Poverty provides avenues for leakages relating to corruption and rent seeking to flourish (Ambimbola et al, 2007).

b) Inadequate Legal Framework for Development

Rural development has been benighted with problems. One of such problems is inadequate legal framework for development. A good legal framework is a desideratum for a balanced and all round development of a nation. This is lacking in Sub-Saharan Africa nations such as Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. A cursory look at the political theatre of these countries clearly indicates that with regard to rural development, the coherent sets of rules are not clearly spelt out by the appropriate ministry. There is little communication

where there is wide spread illiteracy, multiple languages are spoken and the media are inadequate (World Bank, 1990).

c) Poor Funding

Poor funding is a factor that has constituted a cog in the wheel of rural development. The various countries in West Africa in their bid for authoritative allocation of value among the contending forces within the nation plan budgets. Funds are allocated to various projects in the budget. However, the funds allocated to rural development programmes are grossly inadequate to make meaningful changes. Most of the interventionist agencies, for instance the Seed Accelerated Programme in GAMBIA and the River Basin Development Authorities in Nigeria are cash strapped. Thus, inadequate funding poses a limitation to rural development drive of Sub-Saharan nations.

d) Over Ambitious Goals

According to Egonwan (2000), most policies in developing countries tend to be over ambitious, sweeping and non-fundamental in nature. This is so as most of the governments in the Sub-Saharan countries are influenced by special conditions. Most of the programmes and policies are benighted with various constraints during implementation due to the fact that the projects are too grandiose, lack of appropriate technology, inadequate human resource and overstretching of available resource (Egonwan, 2000).

e) Corruption

Corruption is one of the factors or constraints hampering rural development drive in Sub-Saharan Africa countries. According to Ijeoma (2006), various forms of corruption are prevalent in Nigeria and other West African countries. Corrupt practices are reported in both high and low places where power resides- the civil service, state owned enterprises, interventionist agencies, etc (Egonwan, 2000). Public officials in their bid to meet the expectations of their families, and communities engage themselves in all shades of corruption. A classical example of this is when contracts are awarded for the

construction of infrastructures in the rural sectors of Nigeria; the resources are utilized by the bureaucrats for their selfish ends (Ijeoma, 2006). This type of corruption equally manifests itself in Ghana years ago when a judicial inquiry carried out revealed that even the mortuary attendants took bribes, illustrative of the moral decadence prevalent in Ghana (Egbonwan, 2000).

f) Cultural Factor

A potent constraint to the implementation of rural development policy drives of Sub-Saharan countries is cultural factor which impinges heavily on the development of the rural economies of West Africa. For example, Nigerians place high premium on burial ceremonies, as well as venerating the dead through obsequies (Iyoha, 2006). It is indeed expensive. Such money should have been directed towards productive investment that will be beneficial to the individual and the community at large. It inhibits capital accumulation and investment in the rural sector (Iyoha, 2006).

g) Lack of Clearly Defined Programmes of Goals

In Sub-Saharan African countries, lack of clearly defined programmes pose problems to the implementation of rural development policies. This is due to the fact that specific actions aimed at achieving policy goals are not properly articulated. The net result is that government officials resort to fire brigade approach and policy of trial and error (Egonwan, 2000). This, no doubt, contributes a great deal in hampering rural development policy drives.

h) Lack of Continuity of Policy and Programmes of IRD

Political instability and frequent change of regimes and public officials by the government in Sub-Saharan nations is a factor militating against rural development. When a regime initiates a policy, it is suppose to ensure that such a policy is supervised through all the stages until evaluation and feedback of such policy. But in Nigeria and other West African countries, frequent changes of ministers of agriculture, water resources and commissioners of agriculture in the

respective states are prevalent. This tends to make switchover difficult to entirely different priorities and objectives (Egonwan, 2000). Recently, President Goodluck Jonathan changed the Federal Executive Council. Some of the ministers had barely served for two years. This no doubt will affect policy implementation in the various federal ministries in Nigeria.

Prospect of Rural Development

Rural development drive in Sub-Saharan nations has a resonnance because of the variegated merits the countries will derive from it (World Bank, 1999). An articulate and proper implementation of policies and programmes of rural development will lift these less developed countries (LDC) from the miasma and tatters of gross underdevelopment to diversifying the prostrated economies of these nations, as it has been experienced in rural China, Malaysia, Indonesia etc (Embong, 2009). Apart from the West Africa nations been able to feed their teeming population, it will enhance their industrialization base, as well as improve the Gross Domestic Product (World Bank 2009). West African Countries will be a force to reckon with among the comity of nations globally.

Conclusion

From all intent and purpose, this paper has to the best of its authors discussed implementation issues in rural development in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is timely because of the avalanche of problems that is associated with the implementation of policies and programmes of rural development by these nations. To arrest this unsavoury scenario bedevilling these nations, the authors postulate that the central, state/regional and local governments of these countries must embrace the mounting of sound policies and programmes of rural development. They must take a holistic and comprehensive approach, taking into cognizance the constraints bedevilling rural devotement. Through this medium, the Sub-Saharan African nations will leave their economic woods and march on towards sustainable development.

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