

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria since political independence has been engaging in rural development projects ranging from health to roads which are executed in rural settlements by the local government. Local government according to Adejo (2003) is the bedrock for rural transformation. Barry and Goldman (2000) stated that the idea of local government was born out of the need to bring government closer to the people as a mechanism to engender good governance at the grassroots level. Sharing a similar view, Ogunna (1996) reported that the reasons for establishing local government is to bring good governance in the rural areas so that local people can participate fully in the process of governance, to provide essential local services and speed up the pace of socio-economic and political development. Section 7 of the 1999 Constitution guaranteed a system of local government on democratic principle, and stipulated that one of the functions of local government council is to participate in the development of their area (Abbas and Ahmad, 2012).

Democracy and good governance most especially at the local government level are preconditions for economic development of the rural area (Adesina, 2002). Over 80 percent of the inhabitants of the rural areas are primarily engaged in farming and produces more than 70 percent of the food consumed in Nigeria. Despite the contributions of the rural people to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), development of the rural areas has not been given the deserved attention. As a consequence, rural people suffer untold hardships; they have been described as "Nigeria's neglected rural majority" and the "stagnant sector" in the Nigerian economy (Anthonio, 1967). Rural people constitute the neglected poor with high level of poverty and poor standard of living (Ijere, 1981).

Many assistance organizations emphasize poverty reduction as an important international assistance goal. The number of organizations which focus on rural development as a way to reduce poverty has grown with the realization that most impoverished groups live in rural areas. The major international trends for poverty reduction and rural development include: The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995 declared the goal to reduce absolute poverty in the world by half through people-centred social development. As a result of this conference, the goal of reducing the ratio of the poor by half between 1990 to 2015 was adopted at the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) High Level Meeting of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996. In addition, the UN General Assembly (Millennium Summit) in 2000 promoted this effort as one of its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with the World Bank and IMF also promoting the target.

Other organizations engaging in rural development include Asian Development Bank (ADB) which is shifting its development assistance focus to fighting poverty and the World Bank is developing a new strategy for rural development in addition to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom adopted the sustainable livelihood concept as an alternative development approach to existing rural development and for effective anti-poverty programs. Moreover, most NGOs regard rural development as an effective in reducing poverty and have expanded their activities to include remote rural areas such as areas in Southeast Asia. Community participation has been recognized as an essential asset in the promotion of the independence of local people with many organizations implementing multi-sectored activities based on local conditions, such as activities in

agriculture, forestry, and fisheries as well as non-agricultural income generation, education, health care and hygiene and infrastructure improvement.

There were many innovative models of rural development in Nigeria which includes Directorate for Food Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI); River Basin Development Authorities (REDAS); Industrial Development Corporation (IDC); Rural Banking Scheme (RBS) Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN); National Directorate of Employment (NDE); Better Life for Rural Women (BLRW); Community Banking Programme (CBP); Family Support Programme (FSP); Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP); National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS); Anambra State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (ASEEDS). These programmes of development yield little or no benefits to rural dwellers. That may be the reason Olaniwola and Adeleye (2005:9) assumed that rural people have benefited little from most of these rural development programmes.

The government of Anambra State put in place a unique approach to rural development known as Anambra Integrated Development Strategy (ANIDS) to meet up with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS). The aim of this development strategy is to solve the problems of development in rural areas in Anambra State.

Any programme of development, especially in a Federal State must take cognizance of the existence of Local Government Council. According to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999:6) every local government in the country shall participate in economic planning and development of its own area of jurisdiction. To strengthen this task bestowed on the local government, General Ibrahim Babangida, reminded Nigerians that local government were not created to pay salaries only, but to ensure collective participation in governance, motivate physical and economic development opportunities and provide social services which can improve the well being of the rural people (Oyarbaire and Olagunju 1998:49). Rural development is mainly the role of local government because it is the government at the grassroots level.

The ability of local government to carry out its function of development depends on the availability of fund to the local government. That may be the reason why Adedeji (1969:96) says that the success or failure of any local government depends on the financial resources available to it.

In Anambra State the government made use of caretaker committee because there was absence of democratically elected government at the grassroots level in Anambra State during Obi Administration. According to Lele (1975:20) rural development means improving the living standards of the masses of low income residing in rural areas, and making the process of their development self-sustaining. As far as government makes effort to alleviate poverty at the grassroots level, there must be a good relationship with the local government council and the state government.

Unfortunately during the Obi administration, there was no democratically elected government at the grassroots and this might constitute problem to development efforts of state government. The rural dwellers in Anambra state are mostly farmers who work in the farm from morning till evening to provide food cheaply to the city dwellers. Many rural areas in the state have built schools through self-help efforts but most of the schools lack necessary aids like writing desk, well equipped science laboratory etc. In Anambra State, there are efforts to alleviate the plight of the rural poor that is the reason for the introduction of various development programmes such as State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS). The overall objective of all these programmes of development initiated by the government is to bridge the glaring gap between the urban and rural areas in terms of infrastructure, resource distribution, human resource development and employment. It is worthy of note that these programmes of development yield little

or no dividends to the rural dwellers due to various challenges facing rural development which include inadequate finance, lack of autonomy of the local government, lack of democratically elected government at the grassroots, insecurity, etc. However, local government in Anambra State engaged in development of infrastructures, human resource development and employment, unfortunately, some of the projects embarked upon by the local government were not completed and seems to have been abandoned. For example Nodu street road in Awka South was not completed. The expected development which local government were expected to foster in the rural areas now suffers. Thus, there is a genuine need for an objective academic exploration and evaluation of local government and rural development in Anambra State with the primary goal of offering a useful and workable solution.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria about 80% of the entire population reside in rural areas (Ogbazi, 1998:20). These rural dwellers are mainly peasant farmers who find it difficult to feed and to provide most basic necessities of livelihood to their immediate families. The level of poverty among rural dwellers in Nigeria is eloquent testimony to the need for development of the rural environment. This situation was incident to identified problems, which include infrastructure, peasant and subsistence agriculture, poor network of roads, low commercial activities, lack of food preservation facilities and erosion menace (Anambra State Government 1986:9). Olamilekan (2006:13) was not comfortable with the interventions over the local government financial operations by the higher level of government. According to him the control of the revenue accruing to local governments by both federal and state government was not indicative of a genuine desire to straighten the local governments and to meet the high expectations of the people. Anambra state since its creation has experienced a chequered political history which disrupted the structure and functioning of the body politics and further hindered effective delivery of public goods and services. The state is making enormous efforts to wriggle her out of the intricate web of infrastructural decay. Despite huge budgetary allocation to the state and enormous natural resources in the state, Anambra state is still far from meeting the demands and expectations of its citizens. All the programmes of development embraced by the government yield little or no dividends to the citizens. The state is still lacking in the areas: infrastructural facilities, good road networks, adequate water, access roads in rural areas and hinterland, healthcare services, transportation services, rural electrification etc.

Various programmes of development initiated by successive government has problem of effective implementation. That may be the reason why Onah (2006:40) highlighted that, "the question that face Nigerian leaders has not been whether to plan or not, but what kind of development plan to adopt in dealing decisively with the problem of widespread poverty, large scale unemployment, technologically backwardness, low-capacity utilization, inadequate and decayed social and physical infrastructure, illiteracy, urban congestion, short-life expectancy, excessive debt burden, high incidence of diseases and environmental degradation". Given the above premise, this study seeks answers to the following questions

1.3. Research Questions

What are the challenges of rural development in Anambra State?

Has the local government been playing the constitutional roles of developing the grassroots in Anambra state?

Are there some effects of non-democratically elected government at the local government on grassroots development in Anambra State?

What are the possible solutions to the problems of rural development by local government in Anambra State?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to investigate local government and rural development in Anambra State: 2006 – 2014. The specific objectives are to:

- i identify the challenges of rural development in Anambra State;
- ii investigate whether the local governments have been playing the constitutional roles of developing the grassroots in Anambra state;
- iii ascertain the effects of non-democratically elected government at the local government on grassroots development in Anambra State; and to
- iv suggest possible solutions to the problems of rural development by local government in Anambra State.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ANAMBRA STATE 2006 2014

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