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RURAL-URBAN POLARIZATION AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN NIGERIA

¹UBONG EDEM EFFIONG¹* & SUPPER ROLAND OKIJIE²

¹Department of Economics, University of Uyo, P.M.B. 1017, Uyo, Akwalbom State, Nigeria

²Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Uyo, P.M.B. 1017, Uyo, Akwalbom State, Nigeria

Corresponding author: *UBONG EDEM EFFIONG
Email: ubongeffiong3@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The drive for development is desirable for any society given the benefits it renders to the citizen. Such benefit will only be equitable if all segments of the society are core beneficiaries. In this paper, the dichotomy that exists between the rural and urban centres in Nigeria is explored and data from reliable sources such as the World Bank and International Labour Organization were used in driving home our arguments. In the analysis, this paper has revealed that there has been a significant polarization between the urban and rural areas as reflected in key indicators like literacy rate, access to electricity, access to good water, and access to sanitation. This polarization exists irrespective of the fact that the rural population has been accounting for a greater proportion. This lack of balanced development has led to massive rural-urban drift which has exacerbated further socio-economic problems in the Nigerian society. It is critical to learn about the activities that rural residents engage in and to identify the problems that inhibit their communities' development. This will help to erode the high polarization existing between the rural and urban areas.

KEYWORDS

Rural Dwellers, Rural Development, Migration, Sanitation, Rural-Urban Polarization.



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1 INTRODUCTION

The present Nigerian society is drifting towards a more urbanized and modernized society as compared to the high degree of rural concentration in the 1960s up to the 1990s. In the 1960s, the total Nigerian population in the rural areas averaged 83.44% with a record high of 84.59% at the start of independence (World Bank, 2020). This trend continued into the 1970s where the average rural dwellers accounted for about 80.40% of the total population. It then averaged 74.69% and 68.03% in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. The urban population in the 1960s averaged 16.45% while it staggered at 19.60% in the 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, urban population accounted for an average of 25.31% and 31.97% respectively. These statistics point out the quantum of rural dwellers that existed in our rural communities and the attendant rural concentration in the 1960s till the 1990s.

This quantum of rural dwellers exhibits how ‘traditional’ the Nigerian society was after independence in 1960. Given this, the Nigerian society was noted of its agrarian nature where the agricultural sector employed more than 70% of the workforce. This called for the development of policies that could spearhead agricultural revolution in the country. This started from the introduction of NAFPP in 1972 followed by “Operation Feed the Nation” (OFN) in 1976, then by the Green Revolution during Nigeria’s second Republic. Further, the “Agricultural Development Projects” (ADPs) and large irrigation dam schemes was reportedly to boost rural development. All of these projects, which were spread across the country and co-financed by the World Bank and the Nigerian government, did little to improve the rural populace's living standards. Rather, it has exacerbated the condition of peasants by depriving them of their lands, as occurred in the Bakolori project in Sokoto state (Egbe, 2014). The large barons who reside in the city were the benefactors of these capital-intensive agriculture programs and projects. The funds they received as loans were never used for agriculture, but rather for other purposes. “Neglecting peasant farmers has definitely resulted in a sharper drop in agricultural production, with negative ramifications for rural development” (Nnadozie, 1986).

Rural development can be defined as “the enhancement of rural communities' moral, social, political, and economic potentials in order to increase their self-reliance through the provision of appropriate infrastructure such as pipe-borne water, electricity, good roads, and small-scale industries, increase their political consciousness and participation, and promote their moral and social well-being, which will result in tolerance, good discipline, justice, fairness, kindness, and love” (Nwobi, 2007). It is also seen as “a process of making life better-off and meaningful for millions of individuals living in rural areas”. Rural development provides chances for productive work as well as the extension of social services, which can improve the welfare and security of rural residents (Okoje, 1997 cited Filani, 2000). Furthermore, rural development is “the self-sufficiency of the rural population through the transformation of the socio-spatial structures of their economic activities” (Lele, 1992 cited in Filani, 2000).

The goals of rural development are multifaceted given the above definitions. As encapsulated in Alkali (1997), these goals revolve on:

Creation of innovative employment; further equitable access to arable land; extensive enhancement in health; nutrition and housing; expanded opportunities for all individuals to realize their full capabilities through education; a strong voice for all rural people in shaping their decisions and actions that affect their lives (Alkali, 1997).

Consistent with the above goals, rural areas are still fraught with acute unemployment, poor health facilities, little or no opportunities to thrive, poor education, and neglect in the realm of politics. This create polarization between the rural and urban centres. Over the years, policymakers and people concerned with the subject of development in Nigeria have proclaimed the stated objectives and techniques of rural and community development. However, there is still a huge disparity between policy formation and execution and the reality of the rural populace's degree of development (Egbe, 2014).

In keeping with Obot (1987), rural development success may be judged in terms of “roads, water supply, housing, electricity, model community development, access to quality education, enhanced health care delivery, and food and agricultural product availability for rural settlers” (Mammud, 2019). As highlighted by Ogbazi

(1992), the goal of the ‘National Policy on Rural Development’ is to achieve an ideal scenario of acceptable development in rural areas. These goals can be summarized as follows:

- i. Elevation of rural people's social, cultural, educational, and economic well-being;
- ii. Advancement of sustained and orderly development of vast resources in rural areas for the benefit of rural people;
- iii. Increase and diversification of career options, plus income growth in rural areas;
- iv. Mobilization of the rural dwellers for self-help and self-sustaining development programmes; and
- v. Advancement of technologically based industries in remote areas.

It is worth noting that up till date, the rural communities still account for a greater proportion of the total population of Nigeria, standing at 50.48% in 2017 before the urban area took a greater share of 51.96% in 2020. Given this divergence from a more rural population to an emerging greater urban population, could it be that the urban rural areas have been transformed to some urbanized areas where the needed facilities for a better standard of living are provided? The answer to this question is not far-fetched. The rural communities are still fraught with high polarity when compared with the urban centres. There is poor road infrastructure, no electricity in some areas, poor housing, poor education and health care, low or zero employment opportunities, among others. This rising urban population is clearly as a result of human’s natural instinct to survive which is driven by unfavourable factors from the source region. Clearly, the rising urban population could be as a result of rural-urban migration which has its attendant consequences on the socio-economic well-being of the society.

One of the core reflections of the rural-urban migration is the rising rural unemployment with an ever increasing urban unemployment due to excessive influx of rural dwellers into the urban centres. The urban unemployment as at January 2015 was 4.076% which escalated to 6.483% in June; and a subsequent increase to 7.779% and 9.300% in July and October 2015 respectively. In 2016, the urban unemployment rose to 9.800% and 12.00% for January and April; with a further rise to 13.50% and 13.70% respectively for July and October 2016. The urban unemployment rate in January and April 2017 declined to 13.460% and 13.287% respectively, but later rose significantly to 14.578% and 17.001% for July and September 2017 respectively (ILO, 2021a). The growing neglect of the rural areas has also been recorded in the form of rising unemployment. Rural unemployment was a mere 1.251% in January 2015 but surge to 2.9% by October 2015. This was followed by a further increase to 4.50% in October 2016. The rate rose steadily, reaching 5.277% in September 2017 (ILO, 2021b).

This rising unemployment trend which could be attributed to high influx of rural dwellers to the urban centres is a time bomb if not duly addressed. Other key issues include poor access to electricity, poor sanitation, and poor access to drinking water as will be explored in later part of this paper. This paper therefore seeks to unveil the polarization amid rural and urban areas of Nigeria using basic development variables like education, access to good drinking water, sanitation, and electricity. Polarization is measured as the difference between the value of the rural and urban indicator.

2 THE APPROACHES TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The process of rural development in Nigeria has been driven in a tripartite nature. As enunciated by Alkali (1997), such processes are briefly discussed as follows:

2.1 Rural-Urban Interactions

This method centres on rural development planning in conjunction with and within the context of the overarching national development plan. Rural development action is included in the overall agricultural development agendas of municipal, state, and federal governments. This has not resulted in much progress because the lack of recognition provided to rural development is exacerbated by the fact that agriculture itself has petite or no substantial consideration in overall national planning. More attention has been given to urban centres thereby creating a massive rural-urban dichotomy with the Nigerian society.

2.2 Inter-sectoral/Zonal Coordination

This procedure entails the synchronisation of formerly disparate sectoral and zonal development programs. It presupposes that all sectoral/zonal rural development programs are well-conceived and that efficient harmonization would enable them to achieve rural development objectives. Yet, programmes beneath this plan have been so limited that they nosedive from addressing the restructuring of socioeconomic and political systems as necessary steps in the direction of realizing substantial integration and closing the rural-urban polarization. In the end, these efforts have little impact on the lives of rural people.

2.3 The Package Approach

This method is based on the ‘diffusion theory of development’, which states that “ideas generated from outside are conveyed to rural people by an assumed benevolent change agency” (Alkali, 1997). This concept was used in almost all of the country's rural development programs. Examples include the former Western Region Farm Settlement Scheme, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), and Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), among others. However, it is disheartening to note that none of these programs have resulted in real rural development.

Other approaches as put forward by Filani (2000) are briefly discussed as follows:

2.4 Reformist Approach

The behavioural modification of rural farmers is emphasized in the “Reformist approach” to rural development. Furthermore, attempts are being made to establish ways and means for farmers to have a more active role in rural development programmes and projects by improving their attitudes toward such programmes. So, the “Reformist approach” to rural development stresses farmers' participation in improving rural areas (Filani, 2000). Farmers are so sensitized, mobilized, and reinvigorated in specific ways to participate actively in such growth.

2.5 Structural Approach

The “Structural approach to rural development” aims at modify existing economic, social, and political linkages such that individuals who were previously disadvantaged find themselves in better positions. Landlords and tenants, impoverished peasant farmers and money lenders, farmers and traditional rulers, and poor peasant farmers and middlemen are just a few of the social, political, and economic ties that need to alter. Agricultural reforms, the majority of which are concerned with land distribution, are used to restructure rural communities structurally (Filani, 2000).

2.6 Technological approach

The “Technological approach” focuses on the technological transformation of several sectors of rural society, particularly agricultural aspect. This could imply a shift away from traditional farming implements (crude farm tools) and toward semi-modern technologies (Filani, 2000). Agricultural extension emphasizes a technological approach to rural development. Enhanced farming practices, improved seedling, storage systems (facilities), insecticides, pesticides, and fertilizer are among the technologies required for rural transformation.

It is worth noting that none of these six approaches is sufficient for rural development on its own. So, a comprehensive rural development program must consider all the six techniques as a single package. To put it another way, a successful rural development program must understand and employ the three techniques.

3 EVIDENCE OF RURAL POLARIZATION AND THE NEED FOR ACCELERATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The Evidence

The evidence of rural-urban polarization which has downplayed on the development of the rural communities can be discussed using some development variables.

3.1.1 Education

In terms of education, “the male urban literacy rate in 2018 was 86.4%; the rural rate 59.5%; the female urban rate was 74%; and the female rural rate was 35.4%.” (Nielsen, 2021). This is reflected in the Table 1.

Table 1: Nigeria’s rural/urban literacy rate in 2018

	Urban	Rural	Polarization (%)
Male	86.40%	59.5%	-26.9%
Female	74.0%	35.40%	38.6%

Source: Statistica (2021)

In regards to the education sector, literacy rate in the urban centres are higher in both the male and female categories compared to the rural areas. It is evident from Table 1 that the male illiteracy rate in the urban area is a mere 13.60% while that of female 26%. This is against a whopping 40.5% and 61.40% for male and females in the rural areas. Even the male literacy rate in the rural areas is far less than the female counterpart in the urban areas. The polarization in the male category is obtained to be 26.90% while that of the female is 38.6%. This indicate the degree of dichotomy between the urban male and rural male; and urban female and rural female when it comes to literacy.

3.1.2 Access to Electricity

Electricity, which is a crucial variable for a production has placed the rural communities in shackles over the years. Table 2 presents data on access to electricity and the accompanied polarization that exists between the rural and urban areas.

Table 2: Access to electricity – rural and urban

Year	Access to electricity, rural (% of rural population)	Access to electricity, urban (% of urban population)	Polarization (%)	Year	Access to electricity, rural (% of rural population)	Access to electricity, urban (% of urban population)	Polarization (%)
1990	4.04	82.40	-78.36	2005	23.40	83.81	-60.40
1991	13.61	83.82	-70.21	2006	23.83	83.82	-59.99
1992	14.36	83.88	-69.52	2007	25.28	86.16	-60.88
1993	15.11	83.94	-68.83	2008	25.62	84.80	-59.18
1994	15.88	83.99	-68.11	2009	25.09	83.93	-58.84
1995	16.67	84.03	-67.36	2010	23.54	79.80	-56.26
1996	17.47	84.05	-66.58	2011	31.02	87.10	-56.08
1997	18.30	84.05	-65.76	2012	27.61	84.06	-56.45
1998	19.15	84.03	-64.88	2013	31.63	83.60	-51.97
1999	24.33	84.30	-59.97	2014	28.10	84.14	-56.04
2000	20.99	83.99	-63.00	2015	25.90	81.50	-55.60
2001	21.50	83.94	-62.44	2016	33.97	86.00	-52.03
2002	22.00	83.89	-61.89	2017	22.62	86.80	-64.18
2003	32.70	84.90	-52.20	2018	30.95	81.70	-50.75
2004	22.96	83.82	-60.86	2019	25.55	83.90	-58.35

Source: World Bank (2020)

With an access to electricity in the rural areas amounting to an average of 18.60% from 1990 to 2004, the urban areas recorded an average of 83.93%. This gives an average polarization of -65.33% which is very wide. For 2005 to 2018, urban access to electricity average 84.07% which is an improvement from 83.93% in the

aforementioned period. However, rural access to electricity average 26.94% as against 18.60% in the previous period. This 26.94% is quite far below half of the rural areas having access to electricity. The polarization is still high, amounting to -57.13% on the average. It is clear from here that the rural areas are still lacking electricity infrastructure in a greater chunk of its coverage.

3.1.3 People Practicing Open Defaecation

The health care of the citizens also depends on good body and environmental hygiene. The use of good toilet system is a top priority. Table 3 takes us the proportion of people involved in open defecation in both rural and urban areas in Nigeria.

Table 3: People practicing open defecation in Nigeria – rural and urban

Year	People practicing open defecation, rural (% of rural population)	People practicing open defecation, urban (% of urban population)	Polarization (%)
2001	33.14	13.78	19.37
2002	32.99	13.48	19.51
2003	32.84	13.19	19.65
2004	32.69	12.90	19.79
2005	32.54	12.61	19.93
2006	32.39	12.32	20.07
2007	32.24	12.03	20.21
2008	32.09	11.73	20.35
2009	31.94	11.44	20.49
2010	31.79	11.15	20.63
2011	31.64	10.86	20.78
2012	31.49	10.57	20.92
2013	31.33	10.28	21.06
2014	31.18	9.99	21.20
2015	31.03	9.69	21.34
2016	30.88	9.40	21.48
2017	30.73	9.11	21.62
2018	30.58	8.82	21.76
2019	29.87	8.72	21.15
2020	29.68	8.47	21.21

Source: World Bank (2020; 2021)

Consistent with Table 3, people practicing open defecation in the rural areas maintained a double digit rate from 2001 till 2018 while there has been a significant decline in the urban component. For the rural area, it declined from 33.14% in 2001 to 30.58% in 2018 indicating a 7.72% decline over the eighteen years; and averaging 33.14%. Conversely, the rural component declined from 13.78% in 2001 to 8.82% in 2018 indicating a 35.99% decline; and averaging 11.30% only though still not desirable. This gives an average polarization rate of 21.84% between the rural and urban areas, reflecting how worse-off the rural communities have been in respect to a good toilet system. The world Bank (2021) publication placed proportion of the rural dwellers practicing open defecation at 29.87% and 29.68% for 2019 and 2020; while that of urban dwellers at 8.72% and 8.47% in the respective years.

3.1.4 Basic Drinking Water

There is a common saying that “water is life”. The human race needs water in almost all of its household dealings like washing, cooking, drinking and bathing. Having a good drinking is crucial as it affects the well-being of the people. This is because unsafe drinking water correlates with water-borne diseases like typhoid fever, cholera, giardia, dysentery, Hepatitis A, Salmonella, and Escherichia Coli (E. coli). Have safe drinking water in the rural areas of Nigeria has been quite a big issue, but data in Table 4 shows some degree of improvements over time.

Table 4: People using at least basic drinking water services – rural and urban

Year	People using at least basic drinking water services, rural (% of rural population)	People using at least basic drinking water services, urban (% of urban population)	Polarization (%)
2001	34.88	72.98	-38.11
2002	36.04	73.20	-37.16
2003	37.24	74.06	-36.82
2004	38.45	74.93	-36.48
2005	39.66	75.80	-36.14
2006	40.87	76.68	-35.81
2007	42.08	77.55	-35.47
2008	43.30	78.44	-35.14
2009	44.52	79.32	-34.80
2010	45.74	80.21	-34.47
2011	46.96	81.10	-34.14
2012	48.19	82.00	-33.81
2013	49.42	82.90	-33.49
2014	50.65	83.81	-33.16
2015	51.88	84.72	-32.84
2016	53.11	85.63	-32.51
2017	54.35	86.55	-32.19
2018	55.59	87.47	-31.87
2019	60.01	90.95	-30.94
2020	61.66	92.36	-30.70

Source: World Bank (2020; 2021)

A greater chunk of the rural communities (more than 50%) in 2001 to 2013 could not have access to basic drinking water services. in this period; only an average of 42.10% could have access while the remaining 57.90% were left with no choice than locally sourced water which most often are unsafe for drinking. Within 2014 to 2018, there has been a mind improvement to an average of 53.12% leaving the remaining 46.88% to the vagaries of nature. The urban centre has a greater proportion of the citizens having access to basic drinking water services. The proportion average 75.88% within 2001 and 2009 but increased to 83.82% from 2010 to 2018. This represents a greater portion of the urban population as against the case of the rural area. On the average, the polarization in access to basic drinking water services between rural and urban areas is -34.69% showing how the rural areas have been worse-off. For 2019 and 2020, people using at least basic drinking water in the rural areas constitutes 60.01% and 61.66% respectively which reflects a significant increase against the 55.59% in 2018. At the urban realm, the proportion increased substantially to 90.95% and 92.36% for 2019 and 2020 respectively.

3.1.5 Basic Sanitation

Access to basic sanitation services is crucial to the health of the citizens whether in the rural or urban areas. This include refuse and sewage disposal systems. The inadequacy of such services could land residents in an indiscriminate dumping of waste around the environment which could serve as a breeding place for vectors. Table 5 reflects the situation in both the rural and urban areas.

Table 5: People with basic sanitation services – rural and urban

Year	People using at least basic sanitation services, rural (% of rural population)	People using at least basic sanitation services, urban (% of urban population)	Polarization (%)
2001	29.22	30.06	-0.84
2002	29.02	30.33	-1.31
2003	29.16	31.33	-2.17
2004	29.29	32.34	-3.05
2005	29.42	33.36	-3.94
2006	29.55	34.40	-4.85
2007	29.67	35.45	-5.78
2008	29.78	36.51	-6.73
2009	29.89	37.59	-7.70
2010	30.00	38.68	-8.68
2011	30.10	39.78	-9.68
2012	30.20	40.89	-10.70
2013	30.29	42.02	-11.73
2014	30.37	43.16	-12.79
2015	30.45	44.31	-13.86
2016	30.53	45.48	-14.95
2017	30.60	46.65	-16.06
2018	30.66	47.84	-17.18
2019	32.78	50.43	-17.65
2020	33.03	51.68	-18.65

Source: World Bank (2020; 2021)

It is worth noting that there has been an ever increasing polarization between the rural and urban areas when it comes to the proportion of their respective population having access to basic sanitation service. In 2001, the proportion of rural and urban population with access to basic sanitation was 29.22% and 30.06% respectively, thus giving a polarization rate of -0.84%. This trend changed magnificently in regards to the urban areas with such access increasing from 30.06% in 2001 to 38.68% and 47.84% in 2010 and 2018 respectively. Meanwhile, rural access increased slightly from the 29.22% in 2001 to 30.00% and 30.06% for 2010 and 2018 respectively. Such increase is meagre compared to that of the urban areas causing the polarization increase from -0.84% in 2001 to -8.68% and -17.18% for 2010 and 2018 respectively. This increasing polarization indicates the fact that sanitation infrastructures were put in place in the urban areas with the rural areas being left at their peril. Though the access in the urban area is not commendable (not even up to 50%), the 30.66% access in the rural area is a worrying issue to look into. Proportion if people having access to basic sanitation services, as reported by World Bank (2020), in the rural area were put at 32.78% and 33.03% for 2019 and 2020; while that of urban areas were 50.43% and 51.68% for the respective years.

3.1.6.1 Managed Water Services and Sanitation Facilities

Having access to managed water and sanitation services/facilities is far more crucial when compared to basic level. This is because managed services constitute better health outcomes when compared to basic services. Table 6 reflects such composition in the rural and urban areas.

Table 6: People with managed water services and sanitation facilities – rural and urban

Year	People using safely managed drinking water services, rural (% of rural population)	People using safely managed drinking water services, urban (% of urban population)	Polarization (%)	People using safely managed sanitation services, rural (% of rural population)	People using safely managed sanitation services, urban (% of urban population)	Polarization (%)
2000	9.55	21.53	-11.99	21.93	20.12	1.81
2001	9.98	21.73	-11.75	21.86	20.30	1.56
2002	10.40	21.92	-11.52	22.05	20.99	1.05
2003	10.81	22.11	-11.30	22.25	21.70	0.55
2004	11.23	22.30	-11.08	22.46	22.42	0.04
2005	11.64	22.50	-10.86	22.66	23.14	-0.47
2006	12.05	22.69	-10.64	22.87	23.87	-1.00
2007	12.46	22.88	-10.42	23.07	24.61	-1.54
2008	12.87	23.07	-10.21	23.27	25.36	-2.09
2009	13.27	23.27	-9.99	23.47	26.12	-2.65
2010	13.68	23.46	-9.78	23.67	26.89	-3.22
2011	14.08	23.65	-9.57	23.87	27.67	-3.80
2012	14.49	23.85	-9.36	24.06	28.45	-4.39
2013	14.89	24.04	-9.15	24.26	29.25	-4.99
2014	15.29	24.23	-8.94	24.45	30.05	-5.60
2015	15.68	24.42	-8.74	24.65	30.86	-6.22
2016	16.08	24.62	-8.54	24.84	31.69	-6.85
2017	16.47	24.81	-8.33	25.03	32.52	-7.49
2018	16.87	25.00	-8.13	25.21	33.36	-8.14
2019	17.26	25.19	-7.93	25.40	34.20	-8.80
2020	17.65	25.39	-7.73	25.59	35.06	-9.47

Source: World Bank (2021)

Table 6 reflects a declining polarization in urban-rural access to safely managed water services. the polarization declined from -11.99% to -7.73% in 2020. Meanwhile, the proportions for both the rural and urban areas have been discouraging given that people using safely managed water services rose from 9.55% in 2000 to 13.68% and 17.65% in 2010 and 2020 in the rural area respectively; while it increased from 21.53% in 2000 to 23.46% and 25.39% in the urban areas for the respective years. This is discouraging in that the proportion is not even close to 50% in either of the rural or urban areas. With respect to the proportion of people using safely managed sanitation services, the period 2000 to 2004 was marked with greater proportion of the rural areas having access to safely managed sanitation services, but this changed from 2005 till 2020. Increasing polarization from -0.47% in 2005 to -3.22% and -9.47% were recorded for 2010 and 2020 respectively. Similarly, the periods covered reflect that people using safely managed sanitation services both in the rural and urban areas were not up to 50% of the respective areas, pointing out infrastructural inadequacies in both the rural and urban areas in regards to sanitation.

3.1.6 Handwashing Facilities

The Covid-19 pandemic has aroused the importance of handwashing and other safety measures in the Nigerian society. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic handwashing was not being given the priority that it deserves as a health precaution measure. Table 7 reflects on the proportion of the rural and urban dwellers having access to handwashing facilities including soap and water.

Table 7: People with basic handwashing facilities – rural and urban

year	People with basic handwashing facilities including soap and water, rural (% of rural population)	People with basic handwashing facilities including soap and water, urban (% of urban population)	Polarization (%)
2006	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2007	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2008	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2009	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2010	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2011	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2012	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2013	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2014	7.46	19.39	-11.93
2015	31.26	52.85	-21.59
2016	31.26	52.85	-21.59
2017	31.26	52.85	-21.59
2018	31.26	52.85	-21.59

Source: World Bank (2020)

The Table 7 reflects that people having access to basic handwashing facilities in the rural area was a meagre 7.46% and the trend remained so till 2014 indicating no improvement over the years. Similar trend is observed for the urban area with access being 19.39% right from 2006 till 2014, thus giving the rate of polarization averaging -11.93% within the same period; which measures how the rural communities has been worse-off compared to the urban areas. The rate increased significantly an average of 31.26% from 2015 to 2018 for the rural area; while the urban area witnessed an increase to a tune of 52.85% on the average within the same period. Yet, the polarization rate increased to a tune of -21.59% on the average within the same period. This is a clear indication that people having access to handwashing facilities both in the rural and urban areas are far less than those who do not, thus creating a loophole which needs to be filled via sensitization. Though it might be thought that this rate might have increased, we do not have data to validate such claim.

3.2 The Need for Accelerated Rural Development in Nigeria

The rural area has been stated earlier to constitute a greater chunk of the Nigerian population over the years. Table 8 indicates the trend in the proportion of the rural and urban population in Nigeria from 1961 to 2020.

Table 8: Rural and urban population – proportion of total population

Year	Rural population (% of total population)	Urban population (% of total population)	Rural-Urban Polarization	Year	Rural population (% of total population)	Urban population (% of total population)	Rural-Urban Polarization
1961	84.37	15.63	68.73	1991	69.82	30.18	39.65
1962	84.14	15.86	68.28	1992	69.32	30.68	38.65

1963	83.91	16.09	67.83	1993	68.82	31.18	37.64
1964	83.68	16.32	67.36	1994	68.31	31.69	36.62
1965	83.45	16.55	66.90	1995	67.80	32.21	35.59
1966	83.21	16.79	66.42	1996	67.28	32.73	34.55
1967	82.97	17.03	65.95	1997	66.75	33.25	33.51
1968	82.73	17.27	65.46	1998	66.23	33.77	32.45
1969	82.49	17.51	64.97	1999	65.70	34.30	31.39
1970	82.24	17.76	64.48	2000	65.16	34.84	30.32
1971	81.85	18.15	63.70	2001	64.33	35.67	28.66
1972	81.45	18.55	62.90	2002	63.49	36.51	26.98
1973	81.05	18.95	62.10	2003	62.64	37.36	25.29
1974	80.64	19.36	61.27	2004	61.79	38.21	23.58
1975	80.22	19.78	60.44	2005	60.93	39.07	21.85
1976	79.80	20.21	59.59	2006	60.06	39.94	20.11
1977	79.36	20.64	58.73	2007	59.18	40.82	18.36
1978	78.93	21.07	57.85	2008	58.30	41.70	16.60
1979	78.48	21.52	56.96	2009	57.41	42.59	14.82
1980	78.03	21.97	56.06	2010	56.52	43.48	13.04
1981	77.33	22.67	54.66	2011	55.63	44.37	11.27
1982	76.61	23.39	53.22	2012	54.75	45.25	9.51
1983	75.88	24.12	51.76	2013	53.88	46.12	7.76
1984	75.13	24.87	50.26	2014	53.02	46.98	6.04
1985	74.37	25.64	48.73	2015	52.16	47.84	4.32
1986	73.59	26.41	47.17	2016	51.32	48.68	2.63
1987	72.79	27.21	45.58	2017	50.48	49.52	0.96
1988	71.98	28.02	43.96	2018	49.66	50.34	-0.69
1989	71.16	28.84	42.32	2019	48.84	51.16	-2.31
1990	70.32	29.68	40.64	2020	48.04	51.96	-3.92

Source: World Bank (2020)

The 1960s till 2017 was marked with a greater proportion of the population living in the rural areas. This rural dwellers account for an average of 79.07% of the total population from 1961 to 1990 and 61.15% from 1991 to 2017. The urban population only accounted for an average of 20.93% for 1961 to 1990 and 38.85% from 1991 to 2017. This is not up to half of the total population. This trend only changed from 2018 where the urban area accounted for 50.34% of the total population and 51.96% as at 2020; with the rural area accounting for 49.66% and 48.04% in 2018 and 2020 respectively. This gives rise to the declining polarization between the rural and urban population. Still, one needs to understand the fact that such declining polarization could be triggered by rising rural-urban migration which poses serious threat to the rural areas. Figure 1 portrays the pattern of the declining polarization in rural and urban population.

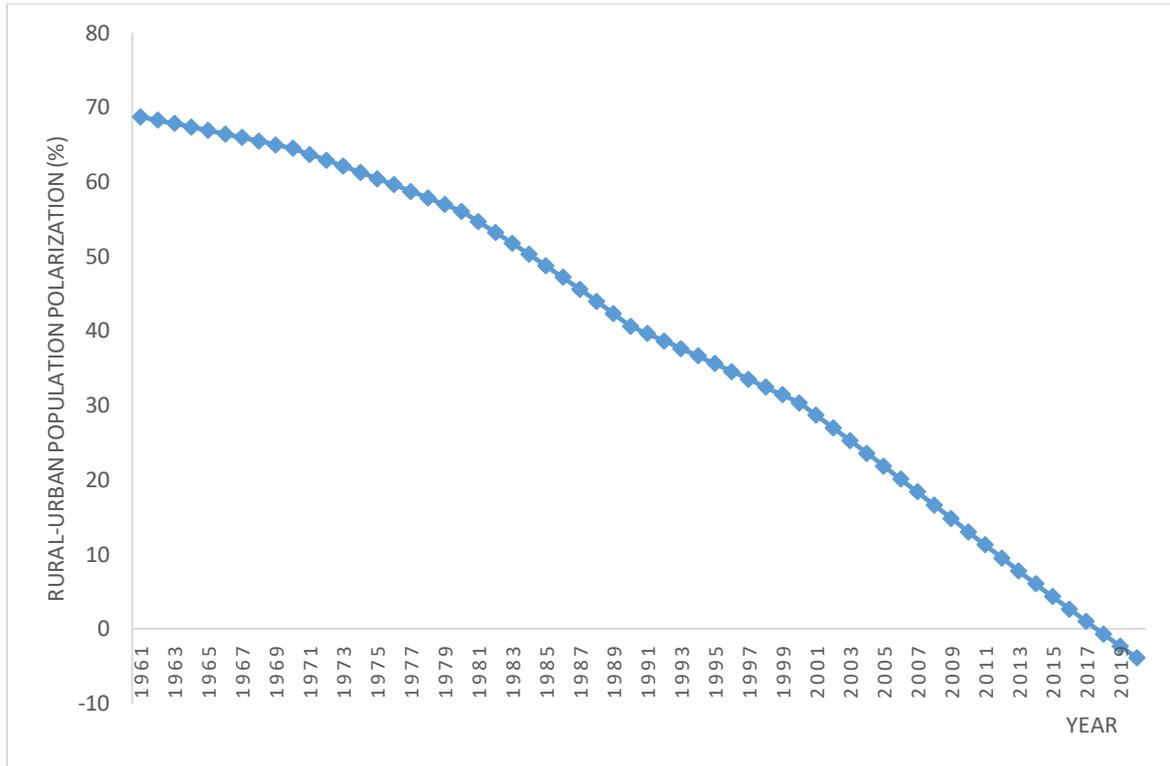


Figure 1: Rural-urban population polarization in Nigeria, 1961 to 2020

As stated earlier, this declining polarization could be driven by rural-urban migration which could pose some socio-economic challenges to the society. Rural-urban migration can be caused by either voluntary or involuntary circumstances. Involuntary or forced migration is migration that occurs when the migrant has no choice but to move. Ethno-religious crises, battles and wars, political unrest, family and land disputes, problems with neighbours, and so on are examples. Voluntary migration is movement that is done on one's own volition (Lykke, 2002 cited in Kanu and Ukonze, 2018). Urban job possibilities, better housing circumstances, rural land tenure and inheritance patterns, better education options, better health services, extreme poverty, and other factors all contribute to voluntary rural-urban migration. Rural residents frequently witness and hear success tales about people who left the village, migrated to cities, and are purportedly 'doing well.' This operates as an inducement to emigrate, particularly among young people. These aforementioned factors indicate clearly the inadequacies of basic facilities in the rural communities that could drive their development (Kanu and Ukonze, 2018). This increasing urban population is reflected on the rising urban population growth as Figure 2 envisaged.

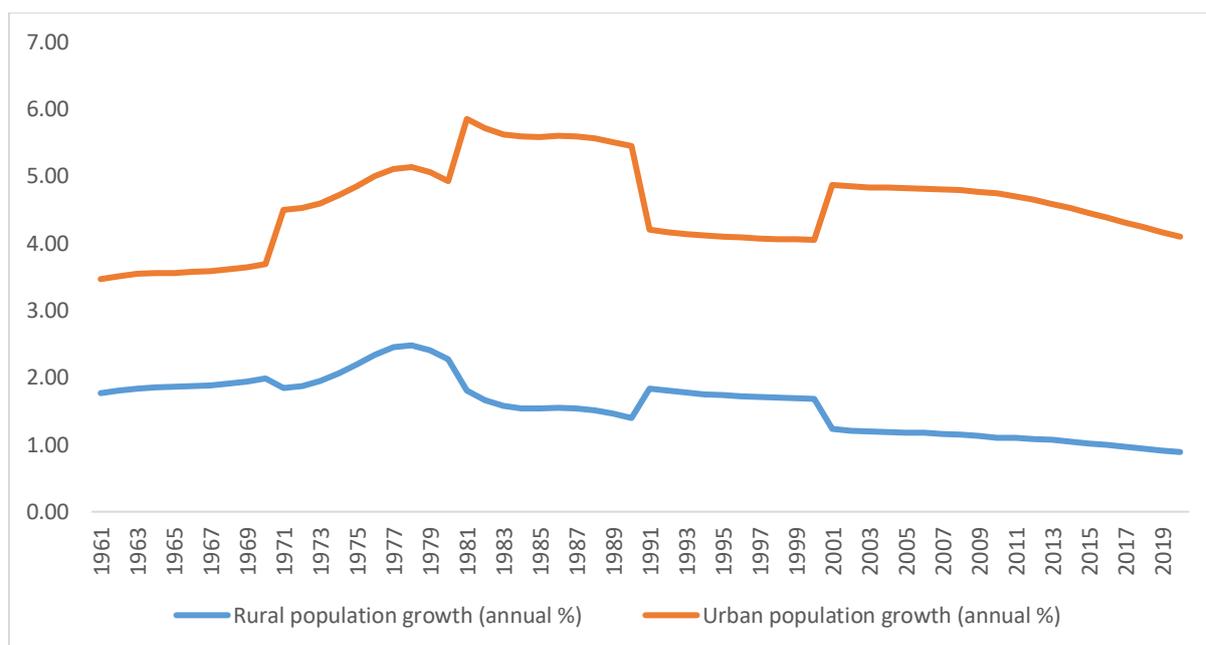


Figure 2: Rural and urban population growth in Nigeria, 1961 to 2020

Consistent with Gimba and Kumshe (2012) cited in Kanu and Ukonze (2018), the main reasons for rural-urban migration include the desire for better education, job, and business prospects, as well as poverty, unemployment, famine, and a lack of social amenities in rural areas. In keeping with a study conducted by Adewale(2006) cited in Kanu and Ukonze (2018), numerous circumstances may predispose a given rural population to migration, which may be due to a crisis, ethno-religious disputes, and wars, among other things. A summary of the key factors of rural-urban migration in Nigeria were put forward by Agyemang (2013) cited on Kanu and Ukonze (2018) and they are as follows:

- i. Socio-cultural issues where people are forced to migrate to avoid numerous social problems at their places of origin.
- ii. Poor infrastructural development and lack of basic amenities.
- iii. Search for better economic opportunities such as jobs.
- iv. Accessibility and ease of transportation and communication has also been noted to facilitate rural-urban migration.
- v. The extension of road network from major towns to the peripheral urban and rural areas that resulted in the decrease in transportation cost and improved communication systems.

Given these deficiencies in rural areas, the need for accelerated rural development should be a core priority. Specifically, Idachaba (1985) cited in Kanu and Ukonze (2018), pointed out several reasons why rural development is usually considered to be of overall national importance. They are:

- i. The vast bulk of Nigeria's population lives in rural areas. This is true despite the accelerated rural-urban migration.
- ii. The majority of Nigerians' food is generated by rural residents.
- iii. Rural areas produce a large portion of the country's agricultural raw material demands, in addition to subsequent industrial and economic growth.
- iv. The development of a just and egalitarian society, as well as a united strong and self-reliant nation, is two of the five national objectives outlined in the national policy on education.
- v. In terms of social and educational amenities, there are disparities between urban and rural communities.
- vi. Inequalities in living levels exist among rural residents.

- vii. The majority of rural residents are poor, necessitating immediate action.

On account of the foregoing, if we are to establish a self-sufficient economy, that is, “egalitarianism and full employment for all”, we must study what exists in rural areas, where the bulk of our countrymen live.

4 PRIOR ACTIONS AND CHALLENGES OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The Prior Actions to Rural Development in Nigeria

Various Nigerian administrations have attempted to improve rural development via a number of programmes and policies over the years. Its significant materialization, contrariwise, has remained a hallucination. This is evident in the rural populace's apparent lack of basic facilities and glaringly low standard of living conditions (Ugwuanyi and Chukwuemeka, 2013 cited in Kanu and Ukonze, 2018). Consistent with Nwuke (2004 cited in Kanu and Ukonze, 2018), extreme poverty is pervasive among rural dwellers, with around 70% of Nigerians living below the poverty line residing in rural regions. One important result of rural underdevelopment is rural–urban migration, which is rapidly diminishing the active population that makes up Nigeria's rural workforce. Due to ongoing underdevelopment, there has been a noticeable increase in rural-urban migration in recent years in quest of higher living standards and more chances for significant economic and social activities (Oghoghouje and Jerry-Eze, 2011 cited in Kanu and Ukonze, 2018). This is not only detrimental to rural development, but also to national growth as a whole. In light of the aforementioned, Kanu and Ukonze (2018) identified diverse rural development programs by the Nigerian governments aimed at the rural sector in the past. They are:

- i. National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP)
- ii. River-Basin Development Authority (RBDA)
- iii. Agricultural Development Programme (ADP)
- iv. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)
- v. The Green Revolution (GR)
- vi. Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS)
- vii. Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)
- viii. Better Life for Rural Dwellers
- ix. National Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC)
- x. National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
- xi. National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA)
- xii. National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)
- xiii. Primary Health Care Programmes (PHCP)
- xiv. National Rural Roads Development Fund (NRRDF)
- xv. Rural Banking Scheme (RBS)
- xvi. Family Support Programme (FSP)
- xvii. Universal Basic Education (UBE)
- xviii. Expanded Programme On Immunization
- xix. The Nomadic Education Programme
- xx. Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS)
- xxi. Ferry Transport Schemes (in the Riverine Areas and Lagos)
- xxii. Low-cost Housing Estate Schemes
- xxiii. Federal Environmental Protection Agency
- xxiv. Flood and Soil Erosion Control Programme

Others include Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (1972), National Economic Empowerments and Development Strategy (NEEDS) 2004; Community Bank (CB), 1990; The National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills Development Programme; Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), 1986; The National Economic Reconstruction Fund (NERFUND), in 1989; The seven-point Agenda, 2007; Integrated Community Development Project; State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS); Local Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (LEEDs), and The Transformation Agenda (see Paul *et al.*, 2014).

It is evident from the above that successive Nigerian governments have been utilizing the “package approach” to rural development. However, it is disheartening to note that none of these programs have resulted in real rural development. A lot of of these targeted programs had some positive benefits on rural development, but many were short-lived. Regrettably, the deficiency of integration of the many rural development projects has hampered long-term rural development. This is partly due to “the rural development institutions' incapacity to collaborate and guarantee that their separate projects, actions, and mandates are coordinated to reinforce and support one another, and that their activities are streamlined to achieve the government's rural development goals” (Osuala, 2001 cited in Kanu and Ukonze, 2018).

4.2 Challenges of Rural Development

The development of the rural communities is not devoid of challenges. These challenges stem from issues like the huge population, solely agrarian in nature, lack of rural participation in the planning process, and the attitude of the rural dwellers. Filani (2000) and Okonkwo (2006) identified some of the key problems which are highlighted as follows:

- i. Nigerian approaches to rural development have been haphazard.
- ii. Nigeria's rural development programs lack the foundations of long-term planning.
- iii. In Nigeria, the majority of rural development project designs and execution tactics cater solely to the ruling class's political needs.
- iv. Some rural development projects are white elephant projects that do not address the rural people's felt needs.
- v. The majority of rural development programs are solely focused on agriculture.
- vi. Nigeria's rural development efforts are hampered by a lack of extension and research facilities.
- vii. Without proper data, some rural development projects are designed and conducted.
- viii. Ineffective developmental projects/programs due to incorrect policy pronouncements.
- ix. Residents of remote areas have a pessimistic mentality.
- x. Embezzlement and corruption are highly pronounced.

Umeabali and Akubuilu (2006) cited in Kanu and Ukonze (2018) summarized the challenges to include high population density, poor infrastructure, high level of illiteracy, extreme poverty, rural urban migration, and low social interaction.

5 CONCLUSIONS

High rural-urban polarization is an indication of a society devoid of egalitarianism. The Nigerian society is not devoid of high degree of polarization between this two areas of the society as this study has disclosed most of these using data from the International Labour Organization and World Bank. In regards to education, the study has been able to revealed that literacy rate in the urban area in both the male and female components has been far more higher compared to the rural areas. This gave rise to high degree of polarity between the rural and urban areas education wise. In terms of access to electricity, the rural areas were also seen to be lacking behind significantly with the urban areas having greater access to electricity. Other variables captured were access to basic water services, access to basic sanitation services, and access to handwashing facilities. All these indicators still portrayed a high degree of polarity in their access between the rural and urban areas. Thus, there is high rural-urban polarization which has dampen the development of the rural areas, despite the fact that the rural communities accounts for a greater chunk of the total population of Nigeria.

Several rural development programmes and projects has been put in place yet, the rural communities have not developed up to the desired level to provide the dividends of development to its dwellers. It is critical to learn about the activities that rural residents engage in and to identify the problems that inhibit their communities' development. This will help to erode the high polarization existing between the rural and urban areas. The adoption of the six approaches for rural development identified in this study is therefore recommended. It is worth noting that none of these six approaches is sufficient for rural development on its own. So, a comprehensive rural development program must consider all the six techniques as a single package. To put it another way, a successful rural development program must understand and employ the three techniques. Infrastructural facilities in health, education, and other socially desirable infrastructures must be sufficiently put in in the rural areas to address the rising polarization between the rural and urban areas.

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