

# **POVERTY-REDUCTION IN NIGERIA: REFLECTIONS ON PROFESSIONALLY-DRIVEN AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES/PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Since the advent of colonial administration in Nigeria, a number of Development Plans have been formulated and implemented. The essence of a Development Plan is to generate development in the various components of the country concerned with the overall aim of improving the standard of living of the people generally and the poor in particular. In Nigeria, a number of development theories guided the preparation of the Plans until about the mid-1980s. A significant feature of all the four Post-independence Development Plans prepared and implemented in the country is the fact that the Plans were prepared wholly by professionals and technocrats in government. There was no involvement of the supposed beneficiaries of the development projects contained in the Plans. There was thus general apathy toward the Plans, hence the Plans could not achieve the objectives for which they were prepared in the first place. Poverty conditions worsened in the country especially between the country's urban and rural areas. From about mid-1980, strategies in planning changed for the better with the active participation of the rural people in matters that concerned their well-being. This was amply demonstrated in the World Bank assisted Community-Based Poverty Reduction Programme (CPRP) in Nigeria. This programme has, to date, recorded a huge success.

**Keywords:** Poverty, Professionally-driven, Community-driven, Participation, "Top-down", "Bottom-up", Renewal Strategy, Development

## **Introduction**

One of the major fallouts of development strategies especially in the developing countries is the high incidence of poverty among the component parts of any one country. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable between the urban and rural areas. A feature of these economies especially those countries that were at one time or the other under colonial administration is the observed differential levels in development as demonstrated in terms of uneven growth of one or a few urban centres (especially major seaports), relative development in the hinterland and utter backwardness in the interior areas. This, in turn, has given rise to varying poverty levels as between the relatively poor urban areas and abject poverty in the hinterland or the interior/rural areas of these countries. Why this is so in Nigeria and a possible alternative is what I shall attempt to highlight in this paper.

It is good to start on the observation that since independence in 1960 to date, the quality of life of the vast majority of Nigerians had deteriorated considerably. For instance,

GNP per capita in the country was about US\$1,000 in 1980. This went down to only US\$260 in 1995. This placed Nigeria among the poorest 20 economies in the world. In fact, recent statements by Nigeria's Federal Office of Statistics (The Federal Bureau of Statistics) put the real per capita income and real per capita consumption of Nigerians at about US\$128 and US\$105 respectively at the current market price. The UNDP's Nigeria Poverty Eradication Forum observed that in the face of persistent two-digit inflation, sluggish macro-economic performance and in the absence of adequate social safety net, the per capita income and consumption figures indicate weak purchasing power of the people. It is stating the obvious to note that in the recent years, the problem of poverty has attracted the attention of the international community, development workers, the political class, scholars, activists, among others. In fact, the United Nations World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995 set the year 2015 as the target date by which the proportion of people living in extreme poverty would be halved.

Professionally-driven poverty eradication strategies derive from the principles of development theories that guided development efforts in the country from the colonial era to about the mid-1980s. A few of such theories deserve mentioning here. Of particular relevance to this paper are firstly Hirschman's (1958) model of differential economic development within an economy. The key role in differential growth in the model is accorded to spatial interaction between the growing 'Northern' and lagging 'Southern' regions in terms of 'trickling-down' and 'polarisation' effects. Trickling-down and polarization effects involve the movement of capital, labour and commodities. The model implies that if an imbalance between regions (resulting from the dominance of polarization effects) develops during the earlier stages of growth, counter-balancing forces will, in time, come into operation to restore the situation into an equilibrium position. Chief among these forces (which arise at a later stage in development) is government intervention in the form of government economic policy.

Second theoretical underpinning is Friedman's (1967) 'Centre-Periphery' formulation by which he postulates that at the transitional stage of development, a dual economy characterized by an expanding coastal centre that feeds on the resources of a relatively impoverished periphery develops. The resulting spatial structure differentiates into:

- a centre or core region with expanding growth enjoying various externalities;
- a periphery with four zones
  - i. an upward transitional area around the core with growing settlements and problems of capital and infrastructural facilities;
  - ii. a downward transitional zone characterized by rural industrial centres in decline and out migration of population;
  - iii. resources frontier regions which are new settlements with growth potentials in agriculture or mineral extraction and a capacity to attract immigration and new town development;
  - iv. areas with special problems different from those of other zones.

As Akintola-Arikawe (1977) observed, the core-periphery model of Friedman can be used to generalize distribution of facilities at various levels of spatial organization, Friedman himself holds that development occurs through a discontinuous but cumulative process of innovation diffusion. Innovations first appear in a few core regions or areas and tend to spread downwards and outwards to the periphery.

The above discussion has been such as to prepare the bed on which the subsequent discussion shall lie. The point therefore is that the principles of the development theories were what guided development planning in Nigeria from the colonial period to about the mid-1980s. The overall essence of any planning effort is the improvement of the living standard of the people- an attack on poverty. The remaining sections of this paper are structured into development planning in Nigeria from the colonial era to 1986, that is, the Top-down Development Planning in Nigeria; post 1986 development efforts in Nigeria; some illustrations, recommendations, and conclusion.

### **Top-Down Development Planning/Strategy in Nigeria**

Attempt is made here to summarize the past development plans in Nigeria vis-à-vis the objectives of the plans, those who participated in drawing up each plan, and possibly the successes and failures of each plan. It should be noted at the onset that the overall aim of each plan was to promote the development of the component parts of the country vide the provision of development projects/infrastructural facilities that were supposed to improve the lives of the people, thereby reducing poverty level.

Filani (1981) gave an excellent account of development planning in Nigeria from the colonial ten year plan of development and welfare for Nigeria (1946-1956) to the Third National Development Plan (1975-1980). The 10 year plan of development came about as a result of Britain's colonial Development and Welfare Act (1945), whereby the colonial administration was requested by the Home Office to submit a ten-year development plan to guide the allocation of colonial development and welfare funds. As Filani (1981, 285) observed, this plan contained a list of projects considered desirable for the smooth functioning of the colonial administration and the projects were neither coordinated nor related to any overall economic goal. The plan was prepared by the colonial masters themselves with little or no input from the Nigerian elite. As far as the Nigerian population then was concerned, the plan did not achieve anything as it was designed to promote export crops production to feed British industries and for the building-up of the transport and communication sectors to facilitate both the transportation of these crops to the sea ports of Lagos and Port Harcourt and the easy movement of colonial administrators.

Constitutional developments in the country by the mid-1950s brought the 1946-56 colonial plan to a premature end (Filani, 1981, 288). A federal system of government was adopted in 1955. Each of the then three regional governments (East, West, and North) drew up separate development plans. Thus, the 1955-60 Economic Development Plan was launched in 1955. Its life span was later extended to 1962. Each of the programmes of the various governments had different goals and was thus lacking in coordination and overall national or regional priorities. There was increasing emphasis on sectoral growth of the economy. As a result of Nigeria's political independence in 1960, the 1955-62 plan also expired prematurely. A federal Ministry of Economic Development was created (with corresponding ministries in the then Eastern and Western Regions (Central Planning Office, 1978). These federal and regional ministries were saddled with the responsibility of planning for development. It was the duty of the Ministry of Finance in Northern Region.

Since independence, particularly from 1962 to about 1980, Nigeria has prepared and implemented three National Development Plans viz:

1962 ó 1968 First National Development Plan

1970 ó 1974 Second National Development Plan

### 1975 ó 1980 Third National Development Plan

As noted earlier, the emphasis in this paper is on the objectives of each plan and, secondly and perhaps more importantly, who and who participated in the drawing up and implementation of the plans.

The first national development plan intended to achieve the following six objectives:

- To surpass the past growth rate of the economy of 3.9 to 4 per cent;
- To achieve the above by investing 15 per cent of the GDP and at the same time endeavouring to raise the per capita consumption by 1 per cent per year;
- To achieve self-sustaining growth not later than by the end of the Third or Fourth National Plan;
- To develop as rapidly as possible opportunities in education, health and employment; and to improve access for all citizens to these opportunities: these opportunities include the training of a greatly increased number of doctors, the provision of greatly increased number of places for university students, the provision of primary education for a rapidly increasing proportion of children of school age, the expansion of hospital services commensurate with the ability of the economy to sustain them.
- To achieve a modernized economy consistent with the democratic, political and social aspirations of the people. This includes the achievement of a more equitable distribution of income both among people and among regions;
- To maintain a reasonable measure of stability through appropriate fiscal and monetary policies directed to promote the stability of the Nigerian pound and to avoid recourse to physical controls as far as possible (Nigeria, 1946).

It is important to observe that all the above with the exception of objective four, was merely a listing of projects and expenditures. Only objective four could be said to be people-centred. The above objectives were common objectives accepted by the three regional governments including the Mid-West region that came into being in 1963. Of greater concern or interest is the answer to the question of what input did the rural majority-the supposed beneficiaries of the development projects contained in the plan ó have in the plans. The answer is an emphatic ðnoö input. The plan was prepared by technocrats and professionals at the centre and regional capitals (through the Central Planning Office). Most of the projects completed during the First plan period were urban-based and the projects had little or no effects on the rural inhabitants (whose role was merely to support the process of industrialization going on in the urban areas) ó thereby widening the poverty gap between the urban and the rural areas of the country.

The following bodies/agencies were involved, at the centre, in the preparation of the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974):

- National Economic Advisory Council with membership drawn largely from the Private Sector and including representatives from the country's Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions and Universities. The main function of the council was to advise the federal government on planning economic and such other related matters that might help in harmonizing the public and private sectors of the economy (Filani 1981: 291).
- The Central Planning Office of the Ministry of Economic Development staffed with a core of professional planners.

Filani (1981) observed further that a Conference of Commissioners responsible for economic development in the 12 states and at the federal level was also created to periodically review economic matters of common interest to the country. What is obvious from the above is greater coordination and harmonization of planning efforts in the country but the supposed beneficiaries of all the efforts never participated at any stage of planning process. It was all the technocrats and professionals affairs. In other words, what the needs of those in the remotest villages were, were of no planning concern otherwise they should have been consulted. Is there any wonder why they saw the development projects as impositions from the above (in spite of the very laudable objectives of the plans). For reference purposes, the Second National Development Plan had five principal and laudable national objectives viz to establish Nigeria firmly as:

- a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- a great and dynamic economy;
- a just and egalitarian society;
- a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens and
- a free and democratic society (FRN, 1970, p.32).

As the plan document puts it, the objectives were to be viewed as the ultimate or long-term goals of the country's development efforts in the bid to reduce inequalities in inter-personal incomes and promoting balanced development among the various communities in the different geographical areas in the country (FRN, 1970,33).

As already noted, as far as the rural areas of the country were concerned, the national development plan (1970-1974) was a failure. A number of reasons have been adduced for this lack of success. First and foremost is the **apathy showed by the rural dwellers as a result of their non-participation in the formulation of the plan**. Secondly, because of the emergence of petroleum, government's attention was virtually taken away from agriculture. Consequently, agricultural productivity not only fell in absolute terms, its share of the GDP declined from 36 per cent in 1970-71 to 23 per cent in 1974-75 (Filani, 1981 quoting Daly, 1978).

The objectives of the Third National Development Plan (1975-80) were similar to those of the Second National Development Plan. The Third Plan document, however, had seven short-term objectives, viz.

- Increase in per capita income
- More even distribution of income
- Reduction in the level of unemployment
- Increase in the supply of high level manpower
- Diversification of the economy
- Balanced development
- Indigenization of economic activity.

Again the plan document was prepared by technocrats and professionals in both the public and private sectors. There is no record anywhere that the rural dwellers whose lives were supposed to be affected by the plan, had any inputs whatsoever into the plan. The performance of the plan cannot be expected to be anything different from those of its predecessors. At this point, it is reasonable to infer that the top-down development strategy as exemplified by the country's development plans did not positively impact upon the majority

of Nigerians especially those in the rural areas largely because these Nigerians did not participate either in the formulation or implementation of the plans. The above Plans were all, professionally-driven and little or no success either sectorally or as a whole could be ascribed to any of them.

### **Features of Post 1986 Development Efforts in Nigeria**

It is evident from the above discussions that development efforts in Nigeria before the mid-1980s were hinged on the principles of the 'top-down' development paradigm. The 'trickle-down' principle of this paradigm encouraged the development of few urban centres with the belief that the benefits of such development would trickle down to the surrounding regions or neighbourhoods. The overall effect of this strategy was a greater impoverishment of the peripheral areas as the growing urban centres continued to act as magnet drawing unto themselves resources from the peripheral areas. The top-down development strategy led to gross inequalities in the distribution of the benefits of development with the resultant high poverty level.

A post 1986 'bottom-up' development effort that is worthy of note here is the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI). Contrary to the thinking of the formulators and executors of the development plans, DFRRI believed that the people are supposed to participate fully, effectively and efficiently in all development activities. This was, perhaps, in recognition of the fact that development is essentially a human issue. It concerns the capability of a people to effectively transform the natural resources of their environment into goods and services through the imaginative and practical application of their productive talents and labour power. To this extent, the authors of the Guidelines to the country's Fourth National Development Plan noted that:

'true development must mean the development of man-the unfolding and realization of his creative potential, enabling him to improve his material conditions of living through the use of resources available to him. It is the process by which man's personality is enhanced, and it is that enhanced personality-creative, organized and disciplined which is the moving force behind the socio-economic transformation of any society. It is clear that development does not start with things, it starts with people: their orientation, organization and discipline. When the accent of development is on things, all human resources remain latent, untapped potential, and society can be poor amidst the most opulent material resources. On the contrary, when a society is properly oriented, organized and disciplined, it can be prosperous on the scantiest basis of natural wealth'. (Ministry of National Planning, 1980).

The directorate involved the intended beneficiaries of the various development projects at virtually all the stages of a project cycle - from project initiation/planning to project execution, implementation and monitoring. This is participatory development.

For clarity, participatory development is development from within rather than from outside or above. 'Top-down' planning leads to coercion, which in turn, results either in local passivity or even active resistance to the development envisaged (Muller & Glodde, 1991). Participatory development calls for changes in the attitudes and behaviour of all involved, both individuals and organizations of various kinds. In participatory development, objectives

should be negotiated with all concerned rather than set from the outside or above. Here attention is paid to the diversity of the population and to the participation of its poorer sections. The above has been described as Renewal Strategy for Rural Development (Empowerment). It is a bottom-up development strategy.

### **Renewal Strategy for Rural Development (Empowerment)**

Renewal strategy as this concept relates to bottom-up strategy or rural development empowers the rural dwellers or the expected beneficiaries of rural development efforts to design and implement their own solutions to their developmental needs. **It is a strategy or a process by which rural residents, their local organisations and/or institutions identify local needs or local concerns and, in collaboration with government/private experts, design appropriate community-based solutions.** There are two core tenets of Renewal Strategy. These are that firstly, the proposed solutions should take advantage of local human capital, and secondly that they should build upon community strengths.

This strategy has been successfully operationalized in a number of places including the 29 counties of Appalachian Ohio in the United States of America as well as Vietnam and six pilot states in Nigeria. As Kuhre (1995) reports, more than 25 grassroots groups, 10 Rural Action issue-based committees, numerous regional agency representatives and scores of individual citizens participated in designing Rural Renewal Strategy in the 29 counties of Appalachian Ohio, US. Since 1993, Kuhre reports that Rural Renewal participants serving in various Rural Renewal Committees have identified more than a dozen community needs throughout southeast Ohio, including a desire for sustainable agricultural and grazing practices; an organised volunteer environmental work force; the delivery of high quality health care to rural residents, and the implementation of a rural, public transportation system. In the words of Carol Kuhre who is the Executive Director of Rural Action, "we are trying to move this organisation (Rural Action, Inc.) toward thinking about what is good about a community, and how we can build upon what is good. There are three criteria by which we judge any project; it must be sustainable to the environment; it must advance the rights of people especially those who have been disenfranchised; and it must actually include those people in the process. It is thus empowerment of people in the process of revitalising either their own lives or their communities that is really central to what we are doing. **We want to work with people to help themselves.** The above synoptically defines Renewal Strategy.

The renewal strategy as a bottom-up development strategy is also illustrated with the account of the "Vietnam Miracle", paraphrased below.

It should be recalled that Vietnam is slightly larger than the United Kingdom and Ireland combined. The country stretches 1,600km from the north to the south with only 40km wide at its narrowest point. Vietnam has three regions – the north, centre and south. The country has altogether 53 ethnic minorities that are concentrated in the mountainous north and central highlands. Vietnam has had a chequered history. This is a country that was colonised by the French, occupied by the Japanese, bombarded by the Americans and attacked by the Chinese. By the early 1980s, Vietnam was in ruins, mourning about three million dead (roughly 12 per cent of the population) and the third poorest country in the world (Development, 2006). Her story has changed today!

In spite of the above account, Vietnam's economy grew at an average of 7 per cent per annum in the decade of 1996 – 2006 and poverty decreased almost as fast. Over 20 years, that is, between 1986 and 2006, the percentage of people living in poverty had fallen from

well over 70 per cent to less than 20 per cent today. Doney, et al (2006) observe that no other country in the world can boast that it has met the UN Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty by 2015 so far ahead of schedule. The question is how did Vietnam ó a country that was engulfed in war for over 30 years ó manage to achieve this feat? Doanh, Le Dang, one of the country's leading economists, provide the answer which is paraphrased below.

Vietnam was a socialist or centrally planned economy. The system not only prohibited the private sector but also provided no incentives for the farmer to produce food. In the 1980s, a US trade embargo combined with the gradual decline in the socialist countries in East and Central Europe and the Soviet Union led to further economic deterioration in Vietnam. Inflation reached 700 per cent a year in the 1980s ó impoverishing everyone. As Doanh observed, the 1980s social economic crisis provided a catalyst for decisive reform and historic turning point in Vietnam's modern history. **It was a "Grass roots" movement.** Farmers **initiated** a contract plan system to establish a direct link between harvest and earning. State-owned enterprises introduced the fence-breaking movement to apply market-type contracts to their production. Local authorities implemented market-price mechanism in place of central planning. Doanh notes further that the combination of this óbottom-up reform, with a re-thinking of the economic concept by the leadership, led to ðdoi moið (renovation) in 1986.

After about 20 years, that is, about 2006, of doi moi average per capita earnings rose from \$101 a year to \$640 in 2005 and were expected to reach \$700 in 2006. Poverty fell from 58 per cent in 1992 to 25 per cent in 2005 (Doanh, 2006, 17). The point of emphasis here is that the Vietnamese people were the real authors of doi moi, and they continue to be the driving force behind the successes of Vietnam. Is there any lesson Nigeria can learn from this?

Renewal Strategy finds expression in contemporary rural Nigeria vide the World Bank assisted Community-Based Poverty Reduction Programme (CPRP) as has been implemented in six (6) pilot states in the country and is currently being replicated in six other states. The six pilot states are Abia, Cross River, Ekiti, Kebbi, Kogi and Yobe States. The strategy of CPRP in this regard is briefly discussed.

### **CPRP as a Renewal Strategy for Rural Development in Nigeria**

The Community-Based Poverty Reduction Programme (CPRP) in Nigeria is a poverty-focussed programme under which six fund agencies have been established in six poorest pilot states of the federation (already mentioned above). The choice of these states was based on relative poverty criteria developed by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), now Federal Bureau of Statistics. **CPRP arose from the necessity to adopt an inclusive, demand-driven, bottom-up development strategy to empower community-based organisations (CBOs) and local institutions, and local governments, and at the same time, encourage partnership between them. CPRP empowers the weak lower-level institutions to enable them play roles that directly and positively impinge upon the lives of those at the grassroot.** A Community Driven Development (CDD) strategy, CPRP has the objective of facilitating the establishment of effective and viable mechanism for strengthening local governments and local/rural communities, and the partnership between them **in order to respond to their own development priorities** (Okunmadewa, 2004).

As already noted, CPRP is a strategy that is targeted at poverty reduction in the country. Indicators of poverty in the country's rural settlements include:

- lack of portable water supply;
- inadequate access to education;
- inadequate access to health;
- lack of rural feeder roads;
- unavailability of rural markets;
- lack of electricity;
- lack of processing machines;
- malnutrition;
- lack of fertilizer and improved seeds and seedlings.

Generally, poverty in the rural areas in particular means a condition or a state of affairs which does not guarantee an acceptable standard of living, a condition of hunger and starvation, lack of land for development and cultivation, lack of gainful employment, inability to meet one's social obligations. Among the women, poverty is perceived as pain or even a virus that attacks a person not only materially but also mentally, eating away one's dignity and drives one into total despair due to the despicable treatment meted out to them in their search for assistance. At the rural community level, poverty is seen as a state of deprivation and hopelessness which manifests in lack of basic infrastructural facilities such as roads, water supply, basic health care, educational facilities, lack of government presence and patronage. It is to improve the poor's access to social and economic infrastructure as well as to increase the availability and management of development resources at the community level that constitutes the goal of CPRP. The question that comes to mind at this juncture is: what has been the impact of CPRP on the poor? Put differently, to what extent has CPRP as a renewal or bottom-up community-driven development strategy reached the poor in the country's rural areas? The next section of this paper provides answers to these questions.

### **CPRP and the Rural Poor in Nigeria**

One of the high points of CPRP thus far in the country is the high level of participation of beneficiaries at the various stages of the project in their local communities. This explains in part why the poor in the benefiting communities see the projects as 'our' project. The beneficiaries are involved in project identification, planning, execution, management, monitoring and evaluation. Participation could be through diverse forms of contributions. It could be monetary contribution or it could be by contributing one's labour and time, or it could be by contributing materials or a combination of these. At least, the benefiting communities do not see the micro-projects as impositions on them. These are projects they unanimously agreed upon at their village square meetings. In some of the Focus Group Discussions, (FGD), some of the participants from the benefiting communities, had these to say.

1. 'It was at the Okafia Community Hall that the people - young and old, male and female, the youth including our children, the literate and non-literate, all gathered and unanimously agreed on the health centre project. The decision was based on our past unpleasant experiences especially with respect to our pregnant wives. Hitherto, the nearest maternity/health centre to this community was at least fifteen (15) kilometres to Umuahia, our state capital. On a number of occasions, our wives who were in

labour had to deliver along the road on their way to Umuahia. **Some have lost their lives in the process.** The decision to embark upon a health centre project was therefore overwhelmingly unanimous.

2. "The decision for a school project was borne out of the desire of the entire Umuode Community to have our children go to school. The whole community gathered at the village square and unanimously agreed on the school project. We did not wake up one morning and somebody said we must embark on a school project. With the dilapidated school buildings, most of our children had stopped going to school. The Umuode community had been contemplating on this school matter for a long time, so that with the opportunity offered by the CPRP, the community collectively agreed to utilise this opportunity to get the children back to school. It was a collective decision."
3. A discussant from another community observed that "we collectively agreed at our community hall that among the five (5) most pressing needs of this community – education, healthcare, roads, water and electricity supply-health care was the most important. This was particularly so because of the high infant and maternal mortality in the town as a result of the total absence of any form of health facility."
4. The traditional or paramount ruler of the same community in 3 above commented as follows:

"I was the one who collected the application form for this project. Thereafter, the community members were called together to decide on which project they would want funded. The decision for a health centre was unanimous. **It is our own project.**

The above clearly shows the extent of the participation of the people at arriving at the choice of projects to be executed in their local communities., It clearly shows that the people, no matter how illiterate, no matter how poor, they can, convincingly prioritize their felt (basic) needs and they know how to arrive at the topmost priority need.

The benefiting communities of the CPRP derive quite a number of benefits from the projects in their respective communities. These benefits range from enhanced enlightenment to education for the children and improved access to health facilities, market and electricity supply. To the individuals, their standards of living have substantially improved. The poor in the communities now have adequate access to the services being provided by the micro-projects. Space would not permit a detailed discussion of how CPRP has actually reached the poor in the benefiting communities but suffice it to note here that since the goal of CPRP is to reduce poverty by way of increasing the poor's access to basic services, thereby positively impacting upon their quality of life, that this goal has largely been achieved, at least in the six (6) pilot states. The poor in the benefiting communities now have increased access to the hitherto unavailable facilities. In Abia State, for example, 90.6 per cent of the beneficiaries enjoy more electricity supply than before electricity projects were embarked upon in their respective communities. To the poor in these communities, poverty has reduced considerably. There is the provision of better educational and health facilities, reduced cost of education and medical treatment, there is enhanced cohesion/cooperation between erstwhile hostile members/villages of the same community (see Table 1). It is evident from the above account that CPRP as a Renewal/Bottom-up development strategy has, indeed, reached the poor in those rural communities that have benefited from its implementation. No wonder then that it is being replicated in another six (6) states in its second phase of implementation in the

Ogbuozobe, J. E. - Poverty - Reduction in Nigeria: Reflections on Professionally Driven and Community country. It should be noted that the World Bank provides 90 per cent of the fund for the CPRP micro-projects in the benefiting rural communities (which

**Table 1: Key Achievements of CPRP in the Benefitting Community of Abia State**

Achievements	%
Poverty Reduction	27.1
Educational Facilities	18.2
Reduced Cost of Medical Treatment	13.5
Cohesion Among Communities	12.0
Community Development	10.4
Electricity Supply	9.4
Water Supply	4.2
Others	5.2
Total	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2004.

Provide only 10 per cent of the total cost of a project as counterpart fund). The maximum for each project is N5 million. Each benefiting community therefore **gladly** provides N500,000.00 while the World Bank provides N4.5 million. Should a project cost more than N5 million, the benefiting community provides the excess.

**Recommendations: Towards Sustainable Renewal/Bottom-Up Development Strategy in Nigeria**

Development at whatever level is about people ó the betterment of the lives of the people. The rural areas of the country had suffered neglect in the past ó from the time of colonial administration to about the mid 1980s. However, in the very recent past, the accent of development has been on the people, hence the concern of governments, non-governmental organisations, the international community, donor and international development agencies, on the living standards of the people especially those in the rural areas. It was this concern that gave birth to the Community-Based Poverty Reduction Programme discussed above. The success of the programme in the six pilot states had led to its replication in another six states. The question that readily comes to mind is how this type of programme can be sustained for the benefit of the poor and for the overall development of the country. The following suggestions if adopted would go a long way in this regard.

- (1) The starting point in reaching out to the poor vide the provision of basic services/infrastructural facilities is the need to identify and take an inventory of the physical/natural resources of a community, the strengths and weaknesses of the area, and thereafter plan along with the active participation of the local community. Having done this, it becomes possible to consider together with the people the various possibilities upon which local development projects could be organised and enhanced.
- (2) With developmental fund available from government or international development/donor/aid agencies, the initiative for a community development should come from the local community. It should not be imposed on them. The community should, at the completion of the project take over and exercise ownership of the project.

- (3) The benefiting community, through its Project Implementation Committee, should take charge of the management of activities connected with the project. This way the community is enabled to contribute and control the project as it progressed and gained momentum.
- (4) A point worthy of note is that Nigerian rural areas are heavily dependent on primary activities especially agriculture for economic activities and employment but the attractions of the cities have caused the flight of the energetic youthful population from the rural to the urban areas thereby exacerbating the further impoverishment of the rural areas. In this circumstance, only the aged, weak and unfit population are left to till the soil. The outcome is obvious ó drastically reduced agricultural production, hence starvation and hunger. The country's agricultural policy should therefore be such as to promote employment opportunities by diversifying economic activities in the rural areas.
- (5) Renewal strategy for rural development in Nigeria should focus attention on children and young people in schools. This is to say that the States Ministries of Agriculture cannot exclusively deal with agricultural issues. Other areas of importance to rural development must be identified and influenced. In this respect, it is necessary for the educational sector to work in partnership with other sectors so as to achieve a successful restructuring of the present rural economic structures in Nigeria. Such partnerships (not only with the educational sector) are important to rural development. The above suggestions/view points are, by no means, exhaustive. Nonetheless, it is strongly believed that by their adoption, the country would be enhancing rural communities' inherent potentials, thereby securing their long term survival.

### **Conclusion**

In concluding this short presentation, it is important to note firstly that the 'top-down' development strategy has succeeded only in exacerbating inequalities in development between regions and particularly between the urban and rural areas of the country. Secondly as national and international economic environment are subject to change, a re-assessment of strategies is paramount to the creation of employment and social development. The focus is now on 'Bottom-up' approaches to rural/community development. This calls for cooperation between those involved in local community development initiatives and those who design community development support services. New capacity is paramount in allowing local communities to be more involved in their development. Adult education can make this possible. The rural poor in Nigeria can be positively touched and poverty drastically reduced if strategies such as that of CPRP discussed in the latter part of this paper are adopted and implemented.

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