

# Rethinking Rural Development Strategies in Enugu State: A case for the Atkinson’ “New Rural” Model

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## Abstract

*This paper provides alternative approach to rural development in Enugu State. Arguments for rural development have achieved a consensus status but there appear to be an unending debate over the strategies of achieving this noble agreement. This paper joins the debate by examining the current approach to rural development in Enugu State with a view of applying Christopher Atkinson’s “New Rural” Model of rural development in the state. The New Rural Model designed rural development as four-front approach- Economic, Sociocultural, Infrastructure, and stakeholder- led aspects. This paper advocates for the application of the New Rural Model in Enugu State because it deemphasized sectoral perspective and promotes place-based perspective. This study reviewed secondary documents, ranging from government publications, Newspaper Reportage and journal articles to provide empirical support for the adaption of the New Rural Model. The application of Atkinson’s New Rural Model should, through this paper, expand the literature on rural development in Enugu State and provide basis for rural development in the State. The paper concluded that rural areas in Enugu State will be better developed if the Atkinson’s New Rural Model is adapted in the state. Hence the paper recommended that Enugu State government should promote rural banking services, high-speed broadband internet services to achieve higher e-commerce activities; provide primary infrastructure such as transportation, education, sanitation, healthcare, and electricity; and finally, encourage participation of other private and development interests in achieving the goals of rural development in the State.*

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## **1.Introduction**

One of the maladies of progress for developing nations is the absence of development at the rural level. Developing nations grapple with the challenges of balancing development between the rural and urban divides. Nigeria is one of the developing nations that still face the challenges of developing its rural areas. The challenges of rural areas in Nigeria also include lack of basic infrastructures, poor access to roads, poor educational facilities, lack of portable water, low per capita income, high unemployment and inadequate power supply. It has also been observed that rural areas are usually characterized by poor health, lack of basic nutrition, inadequate housing, socially discriminated against and have no channels through which to voice their concerns. To deal with these numerous problems facing the rural areas in Nigeria, government at various levels have instituted programmes and projects aimed at transforming the rural areas into the mainstream of national development.

Nationally, some of these programmes include: Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) 1976, the Green Revolution (GR) 1985, the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) 1985, Better Life Programme (BLP) 1986, Family Support Programme (FSP) 1987, the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) 1988 and the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) 1999, among others. These programmes have recorded varying degrees of achievements but not enough to eradicate the problems encountered by rural dwellers. Many of them failed because of what Nweke (2003) described as the problem of “political communities”. He emphasized that rural development programmes that should focus on the people are shaped and coloured for politically determined divisions whose rural problems are conceivably dissimilar. Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) further claimed that the reasons for the failure of development efforts in Nigeria are purely those of conception and execution. They claimed that the programmes are mostly only new in their names but merely a “rehash” of older programmes. On execution, they also claimed that these “new” programmes are also reassigned to politicians, who have not shown satisfactory executive capacity to handle. Repeating the same process with the same tools and personnel will only yield same result, hence, the failure of these programmes.

As a political federation, one of the areas of concurrent legislation in Nigeria is that of rural development. The federal and the state governments are tasked with the duty of promoting policies that enhance rural development. For local governments, the litany of functions itemized in Section 7(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) is an eloquent testimony of its rural development focus. In addition to the efforts of federal and local governments, Enugu State government have been experimenting various strategies of rural development, coordinated by the state Ministry of Rural Development. It is difficult to claim that these strategies have yielded positive results because statistics from Global Data Lab (2021) show that the state ranked 31 out of 37 states in Nigeria (inclusive of FCT), in the level of rural development specifically mentioning backwardness in poverty, education, access to public services, quality of housing, and development of women and children. The concern of this paper is to evaluate the present strategies and propose the New Rural Model of rural development in the state.

## **2.Conceptual Issues**

### **Rural Area**

A rural area as defined by Olatunbosun (1975), in Omale (2005) is an area with a population lower than 20,000, occupationally specific, locationally removed from an urban area in terms of services

e.g. water, health, electricity, etc. Anele (2012) summarized life in rural area as being hard, rustic and sometimes inhuman. Many rural dwellers are traumatized by poverty, starvation and diseases. In an explicit description, Roberts (2014) explained that the term rural is highly cryptic as some urban cities in Nigeria have very poor areas and what is described as rural in general terms are clearly noticeable. She understood rural areas to make up of space where homes and infrastructure occupy very small space and most of the landmark is dominated with fields, pastures, forest, water, mountain and desert.

Muoghalu (1992) observed that there is a realization that a dangerous gap exists in the development levels of both urban and rural areas. This seems to be threatening the political and social stability (of the nation). Despite the fact that an overwhelming proportion of our national population reside in the rural areas, the rural areas are characterized by depressingly meagre annual per capita income, pervasive and endemic poverty, manifested by widespread hunger, malnutrition, poor health, general lack of access to formal education, liveable housing and various forms of social and political isolation compared with their urban counterparts (Muoghalu, 1992).

It can be observed that in Nigeria, poverty is particularly severe in rural areas, where up to 80 percent of the inhabitants live below the poverty line, and social services and infrastructure are inadequate. In spite of Nigeria's abundant agricultural wherewithal and oil riches, poverty is prevalent in the country and has increased since the late 1990s. Some 70 per cent of Nigerians as ascertained by Roberts (2024) live on less than \$1 a day. She alleged further that majority of the rural poor are located in areas resourcefully poor, ecologically vulnerable and very limited or poor infrastructure. They have no land asset, little or no capital and very limited employment opportunities besides farming and fishing. Sam (2014) perceived rural development to be far – reaching transformation of the social and economic structures, institutions, relationships and processes in any rural area which encompasses equitable access to arable land, more equitable distribution of income, widespread empowerment in health, nutrition and housing, greatly broadened opportunities for all individuals to realize their full potentials through education and strong voice for all rural people in shaping the decisions and actions that affect their lives.

Asian Development Bank (2007) averred that rural societies live in a simple environment, yet the structure and the dynamics of their day-to-day life is complex. Poverty and underdevelopment are synonymous with rural settings of the developing countries of the world (with Nigeria inclusive). Abah (2000) maintained that the deplorable condition of the Nigerian rural sector is emphatic. The rural population constitutes the Nigerian peasantry, the Nigerian poor and the country's largest illiterate groups. The rural poor are heterogeneous group which includes small-scale farmers, the landless, nomads, pastoralists and fishermen and they share common disabilities: limited assets; poverty; malnutrition; environmental vulnerability and lack of access to public services; poor medical facilities; persistence of local endemic diseases- sometimes without cure- which reduces the quality of the labour force; premature death; a dependent, deprived womenfolk; unproductive, subsistence agriculture; etc.

## **Rural Development**

The concept of rural development has evolved generally with the meaning of development. From earlier narrow conceptualization of development in line with economic growth expressed in aggregate economic indicator of Gross National Product to a more broad-based conceptualization as a multidimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as

the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty (Muoghalu, 1992). In this line of thought, Lele (1975) sees rural development as not only a means of increasing production and incomes in the rural areas, but also as a means of bordering political participation, to enforce political patronage or to realize ideological objectives. Lele's definition could be perfect if only it recognized the growing capacity in infrastructural development like roads, health, water, and encouragement of self-help project as impetus for rural development.

Rural development is action that helps people to recognize and develop their ability and potential and organize themselves to respond to problems and needs which they share. It supports the establishment of strong rural community development agencies that control and use assets to promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life. It also enables community and other public agencies to work together to improve the quality of government. Decree No. 4 of 1986 establishing the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) defined rural development as a process through which rural needs are identified, human and material resources mobilized and exploited to meet rural needs, such as food, raw materials, roads, water supply, electricity, schools, health facilities, etc. and greater social participation and economic self-reliance in the community.

Idike (1992) in Otigba (2013) defined rural development as a “strategy designed to improve the socio-economic and social life of the people in the rural areas.” He added that rural development constitutes a process of planned change for which one approach or the other is adopted for the improvement and or transformation of the lot of the rural populace. Adelakun (2013) believed rural development generally to be the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. He stated further that rural development has traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forestry. However, changes in global production networks and increased urbanization have changed the character of rural areas. Increasingly tourism, niche manufacturers, and recreation have replaced resource extraction and agriculture as dominant economic drivers. Hence, rural development could be seen to encapsulate efforts towards transforming the economical, sociocultural, and infrastructural aspects of rural areas.

### **Rural Development Strategy in Enugu State**

The current strategy for rural development in Enugu State as adopted by the State Government in 2016 is called the Inclusive Rural Development Approach (Enugu State Blue Print, 2016). This model focused more on funding development programmes in rural areas. Under the Inclusive Rural Development Approach, rural communities partner with the state government through the State's Ministry of Rural Development on funding rural development programmes in the communities. The communities are organized and involved in identifying felt needs, and mobilizing part of the monies required to fund the project while the state government will complete the rest. Enugu State Government in effort to achieving the inclusive rural development strategy divided traditional communities into autonomous communities. This was envisaged to enable every community participate and benefit from this arrangement.

Several communities have undoubtedly benefited from this strategy as the state government disbursed to participating communities the sum of ten million naira each only in 2018 (Aguene, 2023). However, this approach has not led to sustainable development in the State. The future of

Inclusive Rural Development Approach appears very bleak as certain environmental factors appear to hamper the progress of the scheme. Such encumbrances as disorganization in communities. Some communities especially the newly formed autonomous communities, instead of evolving to benefit from the Inclusive Rural Development Approach, remained in bitterness and bickering over what should constitute the legitimate power structure under the new arrangement.

Another pitfall of the Inclusive Rural Development Approach is its assumption that counterpart funding of rural development programmes will be appreciated in rural communities. According to Agune (2023), counterpart funding believes that a community creates the most effective political and economic solutions to challenges only when its citizens, organizations and networks regardless of their position and condition co-operate and implement solutions together. Enugu State Blue Print (2016) also stated that it is possible to accelerate rural development by developing the capacities of leaders, organizations and networks to identify challenges and implement their solutions more effectively. To this end, the government through the Ministry of Rural Development often organizes seminars and training for community leaders who are expected to coordinate community development projects in their various communities since people cannot give what they do not have. The government always insisted that women must be included in the training and as community leaders. However, even with the best coordination and local leadership, generating monies required to fund the part of the rural people in the counterpart funding arrangement remains an economic problem and a glitch to the entire approach. This creates the need for a new model of rural development in Enugu State.

## **Models of Rural Development**

There is an avalanche of models that have been advanced for describing approaches to rural development. Literature is rather replete with models that were theorized from empirical experiences. This study is limited to discussing only five models- Sectoral, Multisectoral, Territorial, Local, and the New Rural models.

### **Sectoral Model**

In this model, agriculture represents the major sector in the rural economy and its success determines the performance of the local economy more generally. Agricultural decline promotes rural depopulation and a decline in rural service provision. Thus, a policy to stimulate agricultural production not only supports domestic food supply, agricultural employment and farm incomes, it also deters out-migration from rural areas and supports the rural economy and service provision more generally. However, in the mid-20th century, a variety of, by now familiar, factors undermined this approach and the general consensus about the appropriate policies. The high costs, inefficiency and environmental impacts of commodity price supports, especially in the context of surpluses of agricultural products undermined the approach taken to agricultural protection (Buckwell et al., 1984). The changing nature of technology applied in agriculture with increasing mechanization and application of inputs imported from beyond the local economy reduced the local economic impact of agriculture. The combined decline in the significance of the agricultural sector and the widespread experience of counter urbanization has meant that agriculture plays an increasingly less important role in the rural economy.

## **Multisectoral Model**

Thus, support directed exclusively through the agricultural sector faced increasing exchequer costs in terms of dealing with the agricultural surpluses that can result from increased production and with the declining relative importance of agriculture within rural areas which can have less and less local economic impact more generally. This suggests an alternative, multisectoral approach. The relatively small contribution of agriculture to many rural areas means inevitably that other economic sectors have come to play an increasing role in the rural economy. Recreation and tourism and more generally the service and industrial sectors have become dominant. With a continuing policy focus on supporting farm incomes, policy thus began to seek other approaches and in the later 1980s farm “diversification” became the “buzzword in policy circles” (Newby, 1988). Farmers were encouraged to look for alternative sources of income by adding value to agricultural products, by making use of farm assets, especially land and buildings for non-agricultural uses, by undertaking agricultural work on other farms and by becoming involved in non-agricultural economic activities off the farm. The emphasis on the diversification of the farm business subsequently broadened to a wider analysis of farm households and the potential for pluriactivity, drawing on multiple household income sources, as a strategy for long term farm household survival (Shucksmith, et al., 1989). This challenged the conventional view in the United Kingdom, in contrast to other European perspectives, that small farms represented only a temporary phase in the process of agricultural adjustment towards an agricultural sector based on full-time “efficient” farm businesses.

Following this logic, it might be argued that the conventional view of agriculture as supporting the rural economy has come to be reversed to a situation where it is a successful local economy that offers the means of support for pluriactive farm households. While it was recognised that pluriactivity was not a new phenomenon, it gained an increased policy relevance. However, as noted by Gasson (1988) at the time, the goals of rural development might be pursued more effectively by encouraging employment completely unrelated to agriculture.

## **Territorial Model**

However, even so, such an approach is only partially “multisectoral”. A truly multisectoral approach to rural development policy would look more generally and equally at the actual and potential roles for other sectors in rural areas. While located in rural areas, these will often have no economic linkages at all with agriculture. The focus thus shifts towards a more general analysis of conditions within particular types of area, or a territorial approach. And in practice, this means a focus on rural areas. Rural areas can offer attractive locations for the establishment of new economic activity, often associated with the most advanced sectors of a modern economy, such as in information technology, and many areas have gained employment from the establishment of new firms and types of employment (Keeble & Tyler, 1995). This reflects the generally declining significance of transport costs in industrial production, the attractiveness of living in rural areas and the congestion costs of urban locations.

Any sort of new activity can have multiplier effects that work through to other sectors and may in turn promote new opportunities for farm diversification, thus supporting the farm population. In fact, it will often be easier to create employment opportunities through the development of non-land-based activities, either by encouraging the movement of new economic activity into the area

or through endogenous growth. The latter may be seen as more sustainable, although the former may be a more feasible alternative in areas where the economy is especially undeveloped.

In other areas, economic change is characterized by a rather different pattern of development, which we can term the “contemporary” model of rural change (Hodge, 1997); in contrast to the traditional model that is driven by changes within the agricultural sector. This recognizes that a proportion of rural areas have a significant comparative advantage leading to economic success and population growth or counter-urbanization. This embraces a variety of different processes of varying importance across different localities. A major driving force behind it is the fact that rural areas offer attractive environments in which to live and work, while higher incomes and improved transport infrastructure reduce the constraints on locational choices. Thus, those working in towns can travel longer distances to work, increasing the level of commuting.

### **Local Model**

A response to these sorts of factors may be to adopt a “local” or even an “individual” approach. In principle, resources need to be directed towards particular problems at the individual household or business level. This is clearly an impossible task for a central or federal government and indicates the requirement for decentralization of decision-making. But it may still not be feasible for a regional government and may demand an even more localized approach. What is required is some mechanism for connecting the objectives and resources that are given for development policy at the national level to the problems and priorities that apply at the individual level. This is essentially a problem of information. The complexity of the problems and the diminution of traditional agricultural relationships have increased the attention given to the role of social capital and networks in the delivery of rural development. There needs to be a system whereby local circumstances can be assessed against national priorities and information disseminated to individual households and businesses on the opportunities and resources that can be made available in support of the objectives. This will not occur at a single step and the ease with which it occurs at all will depend on local institutions and the level of social capital.

A sectoral approach required little institutional development at the subnational level. However, the move towards a territorial, and especially to a local approach, involves a much greater degree of choice and discretion in the ways in which public resources might be applied. This complexity makes far greater demands on information and local institutional developments are required in order to handle it. Experience with rural development schemes to date suggests that they can be successful in the development of institutions and social capital, especially as embodied in the organisations that have been developed in order to facilitate the implementation of the schemes.

### **New Rural Model**

It would be a mistake to assume that there is homogeneity in the supposed blank canvas of the rural. For one, the canvas is not blank, rural areas are distinctive. The idea of a compelling interest in developing areas outside cities has been a forceful direction in many nations and is not recent. What is more contemporary, possibly, is the practice of forming the new rural in any given location, as the focus has shifted away from a sectoral perspective to one informed by place and context. In new rural development, place matters. The modern conception of the rural does not harken back to times in the distant past when most people in a rural community were of a single class and industry, with little to differentiate them (Marx 2000). The rural is instead a

representation, actively made more or less real by those that ponder it, as a place of opportunity and beauty (Woods 2011). The collective sense of rural places is heavily informed by the past and shared ideals of pastoral sensibilities and of escapes from the harsh reality of the urban lifescape (Marx 2000).

Rural development is a seeking out for what was and what could yet be; for some, it represents a defiant strike at an existence grown wearisome, and for others, it is a hand up to overcome significant socioeconomic barriers, possibly made worse by geographical factors like distance from urban areas and jobs located there. Rural areas have seen “improved rural-urban income parity, farm population decline, and significant rural economic diversification” over the past century (Irwin et al. 2010). Having experienced great change, rural areas are sources of both vulnerability and untapped potential. While there are significant stresses associated with transformation, understanding the great potential that exists for rural development is essential for projects to succeed. In that respect, rural development is not simply about the merits of processes and projects themselves; the possibility for success profoundly weighs on awareness of context. Rural business is unique – it may not just be about making money for those that seek to make a living in rural spaces. Rural life can invoke a sense of community, of working together, and social change. These efforts exhibit holistic traits, such as “sustaining local services, maintaining the local population, reducing negative climate impacts of long car journeys through providing local services and employment, and sustaining local community events, social capital and a strong sense of local identity” (Steiner & Atterton 2015). To achieve these noble ends, the new rural must thematically focus on four distinct aspects- Economic, Sociocultural, Infrastructure, and stakeholder- led rural development (Atkinson, 2017).

### **Applying Atkinson’s New Rural Model in Enugu State**

As proposed by Atkinson (2017), there are four areas of focus in pursuing rural development goals in the new rural model. These areas are the economic aspect, Infrastructure and Service Concerns, sociocultural factors, and Stakeholder-Led Views of Rural Development. Rural Development in Enugu State is calibrated under these rubrics as contained the new rural model.

#### **Economic Aspects**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2003) put forward the question of whether development in rural areas was a territorial or sectoral issue, ultimately determining that it was a place-based question rather than a topic best dealt with through the imposition of policies. A sectoral-based approach to rural policy choices would leave only a few well-entrenched actors in the policy arena – notably agriculture, mining, and petroleum. Agricultural interests have historically informed policy choices with respect to rural areas in many regions, and the interests of agribusiness have been favored over other conceptions of rurality. As competing views have become more well defined, however, the view of rural areas as one and the same with farming have become increasingly inaccurate. A major influence is employment potential: agriculture has declined in its ability to support well-paying jobs in rural areas and areas that focus on such business as a specialization find themselves subject to the whims of commodity markets. Although rural land use for agriculture remains strong, and productivity is high, employment has been reduced precipitously.

How rural areas are changing involves choices made not just by agricultural interests but multisectoral stakeholders (OECD, 2003). Even as rural areas have moved away from too much



reliance on one sort of business, some of the standard advice for urban development, such as diversification of industries to encourage resilience, industrial clustering of firms, or hesitance on supporting entrepreneurial development, may not be appropriate in rural areas. Such efforts might mitigate risk, but in rural areas, some risk may be acceptable if the potential harm from a failed effort can be moderated. Society-wide risks like shocks against an entire system pose significant threats to both urban and rural areas. These may prevent the taking of worthwhile risks on what are otherwise positive potential business deals. The lack of diversification in a rural community might not be a fault, as it could be in an urban center, if the risk pays off. If a rural area balances the risks and rewards of its development choices, toward increasing output of interest to the world outside the area, it is likely on the right path (Freshwater, 2015). Putting nothing forward, however, will accomplish no gain. This is especially true in rural areas, where there may be a lack of interest in the place, as existing interests cling to “what was” about the locale and fail to see a possible bright future for the community.

Scale and management of expectations are central considerations in rural development. From an economics perspective, it may seem that agglomeration economies – where like businesses tend to accumulate for mutually supportive reasons – may be more closely aligned with urban locales, due to the fact that “macro variables such as innovation, productivity, growth, and development are greater in more densely populated areas” (Naldi et al., 2015). However, this does not mean that rural areas lack potential for “matching, sharing, and learning processes,” and indeed a marginal increase may be felt more strongly in a rural area than in an urban region (Naldi et al., 2015). Applying principals of smart development, as may be seen in urban economies, one may expect to see smaller-scale agglomeration tendencies, natural and recreational amenities as well as creative economies, and networks and exchanges for research and development, specifically calling for development of high-speed broadband connectivity to facilitate learning and sharing of knowledge. Broadband also assists e-commerce, which has become a source of revenue to rural areas.

Tourism-related business in rural areas has increased; this may be tied to identity, which is “vital for the constitution of entrepreneurial processes” (Berglund et al. 2016). Contrary to convention that suggests that rural areas should imitate urban centers, rural areas could become cognizant of what is in their communities, embracing the entrepreneurial spirit to create something unique to the place, thus forcing residents to rethink the essential identity of their community (Berglund et al. 2016). In preservation terms, it has been offered that “effective management of the natural heritage is required for economic and well as environmental reasons” (Courtney et al. 2006). As a result, tourist enterprises in rural areas would do well to support the sustainability of natural features and reduction of potential damage through effective management, given the close tie of natural features to the maintenance of place identity.

### **Infrastructure and Service Concerns**

Rural development is not entirely dissimilar from its urban counterpart. It deliberates on many of the same general issues that would affect development decisions in urban settings but employs a perspective that considers and values the unique context of the rural environment. Resources, organization of community and policy/program structures, and delivery of services to communities are all concerns. While the types of issues themselves might be largely the same, infrastructure is a point of serious concern for rural areas, especially those with an eye toward growth. There are concerns about the ability of rural communities to handle the consequences of growth, when

development plans work as intended. It is expected that rural development efforts yield results that are desirable, but the intricacies of the deal, such as infrastructure improvements (sanitation, education, and even access to electricity) may not have been included in the plan. These are essential investments with benefits that may serve other development projects. Waste handling, sewer system capacity, water supplies, and housing are significant in rural areas just as they are in urban areas, but the resources to address needs may not be available in the amount necessary to address concerns as they arise. In some cases, increased distances between individuals living in rural areas can create infrastructure issues. Provision of police and fire services, as well as transportation, is made more difficult by the dispersal of population over large areas.

Transportation and housing are major development issues facing rural areas. Where social disadvantage exists in rural areas, it is often stoked by a lack of transportation and housing (OECD, 2003). Populations in these areas can experience other symptoms of disadvantage, including high unemployment. As a cause for development, rural communities often find that they were founded because of a natural feature of some sort. This may have driven development in the past, particularly for manufacturing or agriculture – such as location near a river or a place with rich soil – but now those features may be less important to the choice to live in a location than, for example, proximity to existing development or location on a major transportation line.

Efforts to improve the competitiveness of rural areas for development purposes include provision of amenities and identification of industry clusters for potential attraction of new businesses; focusing on eco- or agritourism; place-based approaches to development; and creating entrepreneurial opportunities through attention to knowledge centers, such as training and especially distance learning (OECD 2003). Scott et al. (2016) have applied Nussbaum's Central Human Capabilities taxonomy to the choice some artists make to locate in rural areas, contrasting with the view that the creative class normally chooses to locate in urban areas. They specifically highlight internet connectivity as a decisive factor: "Broadband connectivity potentially enables the development of the creative economy in areas previously considered too geographically remote from urban creative hubs to participate in this sector," though the reality is that broadband is not universal in rural areas, so this promise is limited (Townsend et al., 2016).

### **Sociocultural Factors**

Educational, health, and employment services are essential in rural areas, as they are in urban areas, but the particular needs may be different. Educational attainment in rural areas may be relatively less than in urban areas. This may drive unemployment, which in turn prevents attention to resolving needs in the educational sector. Enduring poverty may be the result. Even though much has been done to improve education in rural areas, rural areas still trail urban areas, and a gap exists in secondary and college attainment. This negatively impacts development prospects, as an educated workforce is an attracting and sustaining factor for business. Those with lower educational outcomes generally have higher unemployment rates in rural areas. Some groups are more affected than others by this disparity.

Food insecurity and concerns about climate change have driven policy discussion toward sustainable development in many instances (Behnassi et al., 2011). However, rural and agricultural development projects have significant, and in some cases negative, implications for areas where the development takes place. In addition to the educational issues noted above, some changes, such as environmental degradation, crowding, and a rise in crime rate, might also be expected (Baig & Straquadine, 2011). These additional considerations are not purely "rural" development

issues, as they are encountered in development generally. In the case of rural development, the issue becomes one of balancing what is being given up in favor of the benefits received – and whether the return on investment makes sense over the short and long term. Ideally, rural development takes into consideration long-range societal goals and attempts to conserve resources as much as possible.

### **Stakeholder-Led Views of Rural Development**

Rural development shares in common with sustainable development calls for transparency, monitoring of efforts by local stakeholders, the sharing of visions and ideas for development activities, and a sense of ownership for the outcome of such efforts (Khongsatjaviwat & Routray, 2015). Recognition of the importance of stakeholder involvement is essential to successful rural development projects. Stakeholder participation not only helps assure project success – it creates a stronger community amongst the participants. Time spent identifying potential stakeholders and planning for their involvement is consequently well spent (Usadolo & Caldwell, 2016). In the case of public-private partnerships, which may have positive application in rural contexts, an equalization of public and private actors for management and leadership of development activities may be advisable. There is a place for both developmental and regulatory roles in rural development. It is perhaps not sufficient to involve stakeholders at the outset, only to inform them, while failing to allow them a place in the decision-making process (Björstig & Sandström, 2017).

In this regard, the decision of the Enugu State Government to include rural stakeholders in the rural development scheme is applauded but there has to be a modification to this involvement. While the stakeholders in Inclusive Rural Development Approach are essentially titular-contributing only when the need to mobilize fund arose, the state government can expand its partnership net to also include other developmental interests. These other interests will also provide the managerial expertise of funds.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has considered the useful application of the Atkinson's New Rural Model to rural development in Enugu State. The paper recognized the fact that contemporary rural development strategies do not focus primarily on agriculture but also on other aspects of development which globalization and counter-urbanisation have enabled. The need to combine natural amenities in rural areas with other innovative developmental opportunities remains the bedrock of this paper. Specifically, in the areas of economy, the Enugu State Government, can promote other business ideas beyond the agro-interest. The promotion of rural banking services, high-speed broadband internet services to achieve higher e-commerce activities for local products is highly recommended for the State government. In addition, areas with tourist attraction should be emphasized and the potentials developed for maximum economic benefit for the rural people.

Infrastructure and service concerns were also identified in the paper as a critical pillar of rural development that needs to be activated by Enugu State government. Efforts towards enhancing the provision of education, sanitation, healthcare, and electricity in the rural areas have not been emphasized in the paper. Other social services such as police and fire services that insures safety and promotes counter-urbanisation as well as development in the transportation infrastructure are notable inclusion in the New Rural model of rural development in Enugu State. Beyond the existing laissez faire approach, there is need for the government to assume responsibility to become the initiator of development through the provision of primary infrastructure for development in the

rural areas in the state. In addition to the collaborative efforts of the state government on including stakeholders in rural development, there is need for the Enugu State Government to widen the net of collaboration to include other commercial and developmental partners in the development of rural areas in the state.

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