

Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Elusive Post-Colonial Development Project in Nigeria?

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Abstract: *This paper engages in the sustainable livelihoods debate in post-colonial Nigeria. It contends that the development bankruptcy of the colonial state resulted in a failed post-colonial development ideology which is an interesting theme of debate in five decades of political independence of Nigeria. This strengthens discourses suggesting viable alternatives. Reflecting on the aim of this research and the present development realities of Nigeria including increasing poverty and rural/urban dichotomy, the paper deployed the Marxian political economy framework and focused on brief genealogical mapping of the colonial and post-colonial development plans to identify salient gaps and contradictions of post-colonial development policy. The paper emphasizes the marginalization of rural livelihoods and in a distinct dimension, postulates sustainable rural livelihoods and diversification as inclusive bottom-top alternatives.*

Keywords: *Rural poverty, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods, Post-Colonial Development Plans, Nigeria*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development question in post-colonial societies is often complex, though it forms part of a general concept often deployed to explore patterns of wellbeing among politically independent societies. A critical exploration of Nigeria's development history must take cognizance of its colonial and immediate post-colonial interface. This stems from the fact that the ideology of development in Nigeria has its origins in colonialism and the colonial State. This ideology was the basis of the various attempts at development planning by the post-colonial State.

By 1914 it was apparent that Nigeria had lost the ability to hold sway to her pre-colonial idyllic economy (Young, 2012). This resulted in the contradictions of the dilemma of the two publics (Eke, 1975). Though largely agrarian, the rural economy was the main source of food production and raw materials. The amalgamation of 1914 did not only contrive political and administrative alignment of disparate groups, it largely resulted in economic distortion, fostered "colonial mentality" and new modes of behavior imposed on the colony with taxation and coercive methods of production through the primacy of cash crop production (Wallerstein & Gutkind, 1976).

The rural population who are largely peasants produced commodities that served the interest of the colonial State (Wallerstein & Gutkind, 1976; Onimode, 1983; Ekekwe, 1986). Colonialism brought to bear the agrarian question, a destruction of the natural economy and increasing interrogation of the colonial development proclivity which suggests the need for a brief elucidation of the term development in colonial contexts.

The concept of "development" first was not a conscious part of the colonial ideology. In the Dual Mandate, Lord Lugard recounted that the colonial mission in Africa was purely economic. However to inscribe "development" into the colonial project, the colonial State in 1929 established the British Colonial Development and Welfare. In 1944 the colonial State embarked on what later became "Ten Year Development and Welfare Plan". This was the basis of the four national Development Plans.

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However the implicit notion of economic transformation was in sharp contrast as the all -powerful and repressive colonial State administered and legislated largely in the interest of the colonial office in London. For instance, there was the establishment of colonial marketing boards and rail-roads linking the hinterland-the source of colonial raw materials to the urban centres (Coleman, 1959).

Essentially development is not only about economic or material growth or social progress, the narrow colonial conception increasingly vitiated the development of Nigeria. Young (2012) recounts that the metaphorical import of the British Colonial development Welfare was not matched with its practical impact owing largely to funding. The contradictions in much of this debate is the ease of administration and vested economic interest of the colonial State.

At independence in 1960, development became a post- colonial ideology that will bring about accelerated and rapid economic growth of the post -colonial States. The post- colonial State “is a form of the capitalist type of State since it is founded in social formation that are now largely incorporated into the global capitalist network of imperialism; in these social formations too, the capitalist mode of production, though not in its pure form, dominates other modes” (Ekekwe, 1986: 13). Such complexities imbedded in economic development of the post- colonial State is reflective of the challenges to grapple with development in five decades of post- colonial Nigeria. Alavi, (1972) argued that in the post- colonial society, the problem of the relationship between the State and the economic structure is complex.

Quite apart from the narrow focus on sustainable rural livelihoods in Nigeria’s post-colonial development plans, development itself has many meanings and uses. For our purpose this paper is concerned with economic development. Although much of the debates on “development” began at the aftermath of World War II, linked to the reconstruction of Europe through the Marshal Plan (Ekekwe, 1986).Development was earlier conceived as an increase in industrialization and Gross National Product(GNP),with corresponding reduction in illiteracy rates, improved health and living standards. In this original conception of development, “it was expected to be a systematic process including technical know- how, capital flight, technology transfer etc” (Ekekwe, 1986:87).

The interest in pursuit of development deepened. The United Nations declared the 1960s the first development decade. Ake (1979) argues that development has become a global ideology. It has been universally acceptable in every society and increasingly formed the guiding principles of State programmes and policies. Critical question on the Western development project has been the notion that “the West is assumed to be the model image of development thus development became easily associated with encouraging capitalism” (Ekekwe, 1986:88).

Yet, it is also contentious as many stakeholders underestimate what development implies. For instance, despite the common knowledge of Nigeria’s rich natural and human resource endowment, putting these resources into developmental outcome seems a central challenge. In particular, evolving home grown self-reliant post -colonial development programmes, that are pro poor, inclusive, bottom-top and sustainable have been at issue.

The colossal failure of the oil economy from 1956 to 2015 is a pointer (Ajaero, 2008; Amadi, et al; 2016). There is a widespread assumption that development in its economic sense implies a mode of improvement in general socio-economic wellbeing of the people including improved standard of living (Rodney, 1972). Whether development is taking place or had already taken place or will take place in most post- colonial. Third World societies such as Nigeria remains contestable.

In1987, sustainable development -a global development paradigm emerged. It is defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation from meeting their own needs (WCED, 1987). In a wider sustainable development debate, development involves economic, social and environmental improvement (Davidson & Hatt, 2005). Similarly, the World Wide Fund (1993) defined sustainable development as improvement in the quality of human life within the carrying capacity of the ecosystem. This later definition with its direct bearing on human ecosystem provides further insight in understanding the logic of sustainable

livelihood and environmental or ecosystem security. Goodland (1995) argues that the definition is less ambiguous than the Brundtland commission's report.

In 1992 at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, sustainable development was given a greater impetus under Agenda 21, *The plan of action for implementation of sustainable development*. This was perhaps the first time sustainable livelihoods was given a global attention as it was mentioned in the agenda. In particular Agenda 21 contends that generally humanity must have the "opportunity to earn a sustainable livelihood". Although this was not the first time the term was deployed in development studies, the livelihood approach was much indebted to the works of the economic historian Karl Polanyi (1977). This was bolstered in several works, for instance, Sen (1981) writing on entitlements added some impetus to livelihoods studies, while Robert Chambers in a number of works reinforced livelihoods debate (Chambers, 1983; Chambers & Conway, 1992).

Informed primarily by the need to develop more effective poverty alleviation strategies in the South (Beneth, 2010), sustainable livelihood was premised on a bottom-top and participatory method, with emphasis on poor people's lives and daily needs, rather than the top-down interventionist methods practiced so widely up then (de Haan, 2012). Livelihood as Chambers and Conway (1992) posit, includes capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. In this study, sustainable rural livelihood is the livelihood that meets the subsistence needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation from meeting their own needs.

This paper makes no attempt to provide a novel theory of livelihoods, rather it demonstrates how the parochial notion of development inherited from the colonial State remained a key factor affecting inclusive, equitable, participatory and much later sustainable rural livelihoods in post-colonial Nigeria. It shows how the rural poor households who constitute the larger segment of the society are missing out.

The paper engages in this ongoing debate from a mode of inquiry which centres on sustainable rural livelihoods. It attempts to contribute towards conceptualizing the subject of sustainable rural livelihoods as part of efforts to understand how post-colonial development strategies have either been in line or in contrast with rural livelihoods in Nigeria. It recognizes the gamut development plans of colonial and post-colonial Nigeria between 1960 and 2015, and argues that despite these development strategies there have been insufficient attention to sustainable rural livelihoods. The paper argues that sustainable rural livelihoods should constitute core post-colonial development blue print. It brings to bear a new inquiry into what has already been in existence in scholarly debates on post-colonial development strategies in Nigeria, namely rural development by distinguishing and providing salient gaps in post-colonial development project which borders on rural livelihoods and suggests the need for policy response on sustainable rural livelihoods as alternative and viable rural poverty alleviation option.

This research will be interested in "rural livelihoods diversification" and "rural livelihoods sustainability" this is primarily informed by the need to provide alternatives for the rural poor. The paper demonstrates that the conceptual and theoretical basis of current concepts of post-colonial development generates poor evolution of a sustainable rural livelihood as a strategic development option. This will be supported with a brief genealogical mapping of post-colonial development plans and conceptual exploration of sustainable rural livelihoods as elusive component of post-colonial development between 1960 to 2016.

Based on this premise and for a clearer elucidation of this research agenda, the paper presents sustainable rural livelihoods as a coherent sphere of inclusive development agenda in which the subsistence of the rural households could be addressed and in particular, provides participatory and sustainable development models.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Development has been overly influenced by colonial legacies, with serious consequences for self-reliant economic emancipation and transformation of the poor developing societies. While endorsing the general orientation of prevailing post-colonial development plans towards a seemingly emancipatory dialectics, its poor grasp of the development realities of the rural areas impels critical investigation. Nigeria has been a typical example. For instance, part of Nigeria's socio-economic problems include inequality, poverty, rural /urban dichotomy, rural/urban migration, rural livelihoods

vulnerability etc. A number of key theoretical debates have recently been advanced in post-colonial development of Nigeria (Ake, 1979; Onimode, 1983; Ekekwe, 1986).

Similarly, studies have been conducted in the areas of post-colonial development strategies of Nigeria (Yesufu, 1996; Ayoade, 2006; Amadi, et al, 2016). However most of these studies depend on a relatively commonplace theoretical approach which does not often explain in sufficient details pertinent issues of development question linked to rural livelihoods. Because dominant theoretical models divide the entire line of development questions either in the lines of Western, developed, underdeveloped, Third World, colonial, post-colonial, imperialism, modernization, post modernization, post structural or more recently globalization. Useful though as these recent wave of theoretical explorations have been in mapping and setting of new research agenda to provide an in-depth theoretical exploration of the salient issues in post-colonial development study, they seem to leave out the unit level analysis of development question linked to the rural households and their subsistence.

In Nigeria, the largely poor segments of the society who live in the rural areas miss out on most of the prevailing development paradigms. In contrast, the urban centers benefit as areas of greater attention. Both quantitative and qualitative researches on livelihoods have pointed in this direction as they primarily centre on urban household surveys (de Haan, 2012).

Against the background of these approaches, the Marxian political economy theory is a suitable framework as it provides useful insights on the dynamics of capitalist resource exploitation linked to the genealogical mapping of key issues raised on production, distribution and exchange in a given social formation. This paper thus, returns to the political economy impetus of post-colonial development of Nigeria. This is informed by the fact that the question of the relationship of development with the rural poor households has not been given adequate scholarly attention. Barth (1969), Glazer and Moynihan (1975) identified the perverse incidence of poverty and deprivation in Africa which in their views have been endemic and largely as a result of distributive injustice.

Equally, the understanding of the character of the post-colonial State in Africa within the political economy debate is aptly underscored in the views of Ake (1985) who argued that State in contemporary Africa "is a specific modality of class domination, mediated by commodity exchange. Political economy thus explores some of the key questions of development, particularly the linkages between the forces of production and distribution and the emergent relationship (Rodney, 1972; Amin, 2002; Calinicos, 2009). In particular, unequal access to the means of production are corollary of Western development failures and resurgence of post developmental debates which had emerged in development studies as a distinct field of enquiry that provides both historical and exploratory insights that interrogates the basis of the inferred Western development project among the societies of the global South (Escobar, 2000; Nederveen -Pieterse, 2010). It examines the effects of imperialism, globalization and the asymmetrical international capitalist system which divides the world along economic lines of core and periphery (Wallerstein, 1976). This perspective has resulted in a number of debates on livelihoods, pointing out the need to explore the linkages between Nigeria's development plans and sustainable rural livelihoods.

3. NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT PLANS 1960 TO 2014

Prior to the 1940s what existed in Nigeria was the usual annual budgeting and planning cycle periodically, new and more comprehensive instruments for budgeting were compiled. These were usually issued as general Orders and financial instructions. In 1944, Circular from the Secretary of State for the colonies to all British colonies directed the setting up of a central development Board (Alapiki, 2001). In 1949 there was the establishment of Regional Development Planning Boards (RDPBs), in Eastern, Western and Northern regions which had separate development plans. This was replaced with the development corporations. The Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation, (ENDC), was established in 1955. Its focus was primarily on agriculture however it was allowed to participate beyond agriculture including some industrial and commercial ventures (Ekekwe, 1986:91).

Together with the Region's Marketing Board, the ENDC was instrumental in the surplus extraction process (by the Board paying peasants less than the sale price of their produce in the world market) (Ekekwe, 1986:91). This board drew up what later became the Ten Year Development and Welfare Plan (1946-1955) (Adedeji, 1971). Several debates argue whether the "plan" qualifies in actual sense to be called a development plan as the plan did not run its course (Alapiki, 2001:184).

Following the introduction of federalism in 1954 each region adopted its own development plan in 1955 which had negative effects on plan co-ordination. In 1955 following the recommendation of the World Bank mission to Nigeria, the National Economic Council was set up (NEC) to create a forum for discussion between the federal government and the regional government on development problems between each other and harmonize constitutional functions with respect to development policies.

By 1959, it was evident that the various plans were out of phase or tune with one another. The Western region was about to commence a new plan 1960 -1965, the East was already engaged in 1958 to 1962 plan, and the North had given indications of extending its 1955-1960 plan for a further two years. To actualize an integrative national plan, there was need to harmonize the various regional plans. To this end, all plans were restructured to terminate in 1962 to create avenue for a new national plan known as the "First National Development Plan 1962-1968(Yesufu, 1996).

The civil war terminated the plan from 1967 -1970. In the post 1970 period, Nigeria witnessed three medium term development Plans viz, the 1970-74 plan, the 1975-80 plan, and the 1981-85 plan. Thereafter, the country entered the era of four short term rolling plans viz; the 1986-88 plan with an extension to 1989, 1990-92 with an extension to 1993 and 1994-96 as well as 1997-99. Vision 2010 was adopted in the year 2000.

By 2010 it was envisaged that it would have reached the stage of sustainable growth, development and self-reliance, in 1999 the National Economic Empowerment Programme (NEEDS) was adopted, in 2008 the seven point agenda was introduced, while in 2011 the transformation agenda was introduced.

3.1. Objectives of the Development Plans in Nigeria

The first national development plan 1962 -68 had the following objectives.

1. To increase the rate of growth of national income from 3.9% per annum to at least 4%.
2. To achieve the above growth rate by investing 15% of GDP and at the same time to raise per capita consumption by about 1% per year.
3. To develop as rapidly as possible opportunities in education, health and employment and to improve access for citizens to these opportunities.
4. To improve the distribution of income both among people and among regions.
5. To maintain price stability and the value of the Nigerian pound.

The plan did not make any provision for the rural poor nor sustainable rural livelihoods.

3.2. Objectives of the Second Plan 1970-74

The plan had five major national objectives which include;

1. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
2. A great and dynamic economy
3. A just and egalitarian society
4. A land of bright and full opportunity for all citizens
5. A free and democratic society

3.3. Objectives of the Third Plan (1975-1980)

The objectives of the plan include;

1. Increase in per-capita income
2. More even distribution of income
3. Reduction in the level of unemployment
4. Increase in the supply of high level manpower
5. Diversification of the economy
6. Balanced development
7. Indeginization of the economic activity

The third plan was fairly close to some of the salient gaps in the previous plans as it mentioned “balanced development” however the poor conceptualization and indistinct use of the term “balance” was vague. Also “diversification of the economy” was another relevant objective of the plan however at this period, Nigeria was already over dependent on oil alone following the oil boom era (Alapiki,2001).

3.4. Objectives of the Fourth Plan

Increase in the real income of the average citizen.

1. A more even distribution of income among the individuals and socio-economic groups.
2. Reduction in the level of unemployment and under employment.
3. Increase in the supply of skilled manpower.
4. Reduction of the dependence of the economy on a narrow range of economic activities.
5. Balanced development, that is the achievement of a balanced in the development of different sectors of the economy and the various geographical area.
6. Increased participation by citizens in the ownership and management of productive enterprises.
7. Greater self -reliance, that is increased dependence on our own resources in seeking to achieve the various objectives of society. This also implies increased efforts to achieve optimum utilization of our material resources.
8. Development technology
9. Increase productivity
10. The promotion of a new national orientation conducive to greater discipline, better attitude to work and cleaner environment.

The plan was largely criticized to have fallen within the most dismal period in Nigerian economy 1981 -1985 at the same time, the growth rate of the GDP per annum was only 1.25% compared to 5.3%,13.2% and 4.6% under the previous three national development Plans (Yesufu, 1996; Alapiki, 2001). Equally the “self-reliance” it mentioned has never been practicable in Nigeria’s development practices.

3.5. The Era of the Rolling Plan in Nigeria 1990 -2015

The rolling plan was adopted in Nigeria in 1988, the first plan was launched in January 1990(1990 - 1992).This was followed by the rolling Plans of 1994-1996 and the 1997 -1999 down to 2000,the introduction of the national Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS),the five point agenda and the transformation agenda in 2011 to 2015.

The foregoing analysis on Nigeria’s development plans suggest that rural livelihoods have not been given adequate attention.

4. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Although there are several rural development schemes since independence in 1960 none has evolved from the poor themselves or understand their existential realities (Nnoli, 1978; Onimode,1983) .The World Bank (2015) data suggest that rural poverty has been on the increase, life expectancy is put at 45years,high rate of child killer diseases and under five mortality. This is added to disempowerment of the rural poor resulting in livelihoods vulnerability.

A conceptual exploration of sustainable rural livelihoods is important to deepen the understanding of rural livelihoods studies. There are a number of critiques of both the development plans and subsequent development strategies in Nigeria. While it could be deduced that there is no clear consensus among scholars on the term rural livelihoods, Nigeria had experienced a number of rural development programmes, such as the establishment of farm settlements, the encouragement of plantation agriculture, the organization of more effective extension services, the development of farmers’ co-operatives, the development of research and irrigation, the Directorate For Foods Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRFRI) etc.

Though infrequently discussed and difficult to statistically explicate, Ashley and Carney, (1999) conducted a re-evaluation of early literature on sustainable livelihood to identify contemporary

direction for sustainable livelihood scholarship pointing out its saliency in the context of household survival, empowerment, subsistence and wider economic growth. Conceptual and theoretical debates that might inform livelihoods research include: patterns of subsistence, socio-ecological resiliency; indigenous knowledge, agro-ecological systems, social analysis, inclusive participation etc (Sunderlin, et al; 2005; Tyler, 2006; Scoones, 2009; Benneth, 2010).

There have been issues of conceptual clarity on “lifestyle’ and ‘livelihood’. Lifestyles are largely interfaced with “social conversations”, which forms part of differentiations among various people. It identifies social position and psychological aspirations. Dominant elements of lifestyle are linked to material being. This implies that lifestyles are associated with material and resource flows in the society (UNEP, 2012). Thus, lifestyle is premised on “a way of living”. While livelihood underscores the primacy of “mode of living or subsistence”. It encompasses more existential challenges such as survival strategies, mode of subsistence, poverty alleviation, capacity building, empowerment etc.

Moreover, it is important to note that “livelihoods rarely refer to a single activity. It includes complex, contextual, diverse and dynamic strategies developed by households to meet their needs” (Gaillard, et al. 2009: 121). Karl Polanyi, gave the concept of livelihood a more theoretical weight, by considering the economy as socially, culturally and historically embedded, as opposed to mainstream economics that is merely concerned with individual maximizing behavior. Polanyi argued the need for material base of the people to satisfy their needs and wants, but to understand their livelihoods; one has to go beyond the material and thus beyond formalist economics (Polanyi, 1977; Kaag et al.; 2004: 51; de Haan; 2012).

The absence of consensus among scholars on the attainment of sustainable rural livelihoods within the poor societies impels closer interrogation of the literature on the subject matter.

Often, sustainable livelihood is corroborated with traditional poverty alleviation strategies. This has increasingly resulted in exploring the bottom –top approach to sustainable livelihood (Narayan, et al; 2003).Morse and McNamara (2013:1) argued that sustainable livelihood approach emerged from an ‘intentional’ approach to development”. Cowen and Shenton (1998) on their part, identified two basic forms namely: First is immanent development (or what people are doing anyway): encompassing a wide range of activities to improve human societies. The other is intentional (or Interventionist) development: this involves government and non-government organizations in the implementation of development projects and programmes. They argue that the programmes are often time and resource bound, however premised on continuation after programme span. Such initiative beyond project span is the nexus of sustainability.

Morse and McNamara (2013:16) point out that such programmes could build on or draw from local expertise and resources, in line with existing development projects in the locality. They argue that such “integrated rural development projects” (as they are mainly cited in rural areas) bring integral development to bear. This includes projects like schools, health care, and agricultural schemes, that could be relevant to the ‘integrating’ basis of sustainable livelihood (Morse & McNamara, 2013).

Both models have been largely criticized for being too Western centric. Critiques argue that such globalization schemes linked to Western capitalism may constrict the advancement of the poor(see Bello,2003).Schuurman (2000) cited in Morse & McNamara (2013)reports that intentional development is largely criticized, because it is based on a constructed sense of who is—and who isn’t—developed and indeed what development actually means. Morse and Mc Namara (2013:17) argued that it appears that the affluent countries “set the agenda as to what needs to be done in the poorer countries”.

Sustainable rural livelihood has equally been deployed as a mode of inquiry to give greater impetus to the poor in the context of “hearing their voice”. Thus, the voice or participatory model advanced in the writings of Chambers (2010) ; Narayan et al, (2000b)reinforce the need to hear the voice of the poor as model for inclusive and participatory involvement in their own affairs. It is argued that poverty could not be regarded as merely a matter of income or material well-being – as Chambers (2010) indicated– but rather as a multidimensional phenomenon. Informed by participatory research, it becomes recognized that the poor look on their livelihoods in a holistic way. This reinforces the multi-dimensional perspectives to sustainable rural livelihood practice.

Another influence on the notion of sustainable livelihood and indeed sustainable livelihood approach is the field of 'new household economics' which emerged in the 1980s and emphasizes household labour, income generation and expenditure (Morse & Mc Namara, 2013:25).

There are debates on protection of the environment as basis for sustainable rural livelihood. For instance, O'Neill has made the suggestion that ergonomics, the study of the relationship between workers and their environment, can play a significant role in sustainable livelihood as ergonomics seeks to create the conditions that maximize productivity and protect the environment (Cited in Morse & McNamara, 2013:29).

The pattern of rural livelihood in Nigeria is largely agrarian and derives from the natural environment including land tilling such as farming, fishing, wood logging; carvings, weaving, pottery, crafts etc. Among the several reasons for the accelerated growth of the sustainable livelihood studies in policy and research especially among international development partnership is that it offers a fresh vision of a holistic and/or integrative approach with the capacity to analyze and understand the complexity of rural development (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Solesbury 2003). For instance, Solesbury (2003) contends that sustainable livelihoods became the core of DFID's poverty alleviation policy and other donor institutions notably United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP), Care, the UK Department of International Development (DFID), Oxfam etc. Most of which had adopted the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) as basis for their development programmes and practices (Knutsson, 2006).

Scoones, (2009) contends that livelihoods frameworks and approaches have been applied in a variety of contexts to explore both urban and rural locales. This includes a number of endeavors such as livelihood directions and patterns, social differentiation and source of subsistence. Scoones (1998), argues that the basis of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is to provide a multi disciplinary approach with a combination of a number of variables-income, social mobilization, access to natural resources etc. Such integration demonstrates the wider reach of sustainable livelihoods, underscores the importance of policy discourse in post-colonial Nigeria to impact positively on the rural poor households.

In this research, causal connections is linked to both the theoretical and conceptual nexus between post-colonial-development and sustainable rural livelihoods. Debates on Sustainable Rural Livelihood (SRL) as a viable alternative takes into account the economic transformation and survival strategies of the rural poor households. The literature on aspects of sustainable rural livelihood reveal that it focuses on how individual households or groups earn a living within their resources.

Breman (1985) provided important conceptual clarifications on peasants, migrants and paupers in his study of rural labor circulation and capitalist production in West India. Such insights are relevant in exploring rural livelihoods in developing societies like Nigeria.

The economic growth debate which emerged in the mainstream development discourse after World War II (Boulding, 1966, 1968, 1992; Mishan, 1967; Daly, 1977) questioned the relevance of infinite throughput growth within a finite earth. Daly (1990) contends that sustainable economic growth is an impossible theorem. Such perspective compels further interrogation of linkages between livelihoods and sustainable development as Goodland (1995) argues that sustainable development encompasses sustained levels of production (sources), and consumption (sinks), beyond sustained economic growth. Goodland (1995) opines that the priority for development should be improvement in human well-being and amelioration of poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease and inequality.

The underlying assumptions of the sustainable development debate is that it is possible to have economic development and equally protect the environment. Since its postulation, sustainable development has become a seminal development paradigm as a number of theoretical conceptualizations, policies, seminars, books and workshops emphasize sustainable development. Equally, there have been either commemorative or pejorative perspectives especially in comparative terms with the affluent societies of the global North and the poor societies of the South. The nexus between sustainable development and sustainable rural livelihood have not been exhaustively explored. This finds plausible interface in the broader elucidation of sustainable rural livelihoods. Chambers and Conway (1992) contend that the separate concepts of capability, equity and sustainability constitute the new concept of sustainable rural livelihoods. It is important to briefly

explore these three key concepts namely capability, equity and sustainability in line with the understanding of sustainable rural livelihoods.

Capability which is popularized by Sen (1985) implies the things an individual is willing and able to do for a living. Equity underscores fairness or providing equal opportunity or level playing ground that will enable the individual do those things he is endowed with the capability to do while sustainability is the ability to preserve those activities for future generation. Thus, while conceptual review suggests that sustainable rural livelihoods play key roles in human capacity building and transformation, it appears superficial and insulated from the rural poor in Nigeria.

5. SUSTAINABLE RURAL LIVELIHOODS: ALTERNATIVE OPTION

A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Chambers & Conway, 1992:6). The scant policy response on rural s has resulted in persistent rural poverty, livelihoods vulnerability and rural disempowerment. This suggests the need for an alternative option. This growing concern points out the post-colonial development failures.

Since the 1990s, this has attracted the interest of post development debates which interrogates Western development projects (Esteva 1992; Escobar 2000, 1995; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997; Toner & Franks, 2006; Nederveen-Pieterse, 2010; 2012; Amadi, Wordu & Ogbanga, 2015). The argument has been that the Western development project has been riddled with contradictions and complexities.

Nederveen- Pieterse, (2010) argues that much of the development decades have not measured up to expectations particularly in Africa and parts of Latin America and South Asia. Equally, Escobar (1995: 413) has been skeptical of Western developmental project and demonstrates that international development initiative is largely an “ideological expression of the expansion of post-World War II capitalism”. Wolfgang Sachs (1992: 1), states that ‘the idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape’.

These debates reveal much of the gaps in post-colonial development initiatives at providing all-inclusive and results based development approach. Simeon Maxwell (2010) shows the novel turn poverty had taken at the post global economic recession of 2008. This suggests the intensity of incidence of poverty both in the developed and developing societies. He argued that poverty remains a substantial global problem both in the global North and South. This has been reinforced in the systematic treatment of sustainable livelihoods grounded in poverty alleviation debate provided in the writings of Roe (1998), who shows that the integration of sustainable livelihoods in policy discourse is critical and Rigg, (2005) who explored land, farming, livelihoods, poverty and their possible links in the rural South. Such persuasions seem poorly internalized or integrated in the wider policy issues at redressing development gaps in Nigeria.

Scoones, (1998) sheds light on how sustainable livelihoods could be an institutional framework to explore poverty and household subsistence issues. The author illuminates the theoretical and practical significance of sustainable livelihoods framework as a specific area of inquiry, but also as a challenging framework to rearticulate the subsistence and sustenance of the rural poor.

The intuitions offered by sustainable livelihoods debate underscore the relevance of the concept in development studies. Such recent insights include participatory strategies of sustainable livelihoods with its closest approximation reinforced in “participatory livelihoods model”. A debate linked to poverty alleviation (Rennie & Singh, 1996; Chambers, 2010).

Critical perspectives however have aptly examined the “sustainable livelihoods crisis”, pointing out a number of factors militating against sustainable livelihoods. For instance, Warren (2002:3) identified salient factors driving the sustainable rural livelihood crisis which include: population growth, reduction in land holdings size, ecological factors, unequal integration of rural areas into the international capitalist markets and the increased vertical integration of farmers’ household in national economy among others.

A similar line of criticism is that, the livelihood approach did not go beyond material motives and aims. By calling resources “capitals”, livelihoods were regarded in an economic view, placing the emphasis on material aspects such as production and income, and analyzing livelihoods in neo-liberal terms of economic investments and gains. For instance, Arce(2003: 205-206), commented that such a conceptualization reduces “livelihood to the mobilization and deployment of social and organizational resources for the pursuit of economic and environmental goals”.

de Haan (2012) provides further critical theory concerned with issues of justice, exclusion and power – including the oppressive aspects of power – as the key elements to understanding societal processes .This has also questioned the development proclivity of sustainable livelihood paradigm. Its objective went beyond understanding or explaining; it aimed at bringing about social change with equity. No wonder that the livelihood approach, with its explicit focus on agency, poor people’s daily lives and bottom-up, participatory poverty alleviation and so on, drew the immediate attention of critical scholars. This already began with the critique on the notion of capitals, indicating the vital resources of livelihood. The original idea was to put various connotations as resources, assets and capital on a par with each other, suggesting flexibility between them because they would be interchangeable (de Haan 2012).

Another critique argues whether sustainable livelihood approach should be considered a neo-liberal project as it tends to focus more on opportunities than on constraints(de Haan,2012).

To move rural livelihoods away from its narrow agricultural based notion is an issue of increasing scholarly and policy concern. The agenda for sustainable livelihoods diversification centers first on “sustainable livelihoods” then “diversification”. The concept of ‘sustainable rural livelihoods’ is increasingly central to the debate about rural development, poverty reduction and environmental management (Scoones, 1998). Neely, et al; (2004) provide twelve case studies to substantiate whether sustainable livelihoods approaches have a positive impact on the rural poor. Their findings provide empirical insight on the relevance of sustainable livelihood to improve the economic status of the rural poor. Conroy and Litvinoff (1988) advanced such insights on sustainable livelihood debate as they argued on the practicalities of “greening”. The contention is how to device sustainable and ecologically efficient use of the natural resources. This includes both environmental sustainability and “greening of Aid” to the rural poor. The theoretical basis has largely centered on how to actualize a “green aid” in view of stringent Western capitalist exploitation. This opens up debates on livelihoods diversification and sustainability. A self-reliant strategy and critique of aid based livelihoods schemes.

Carney,(1998) concurred that methods in sustainable livelihood studies should be broad and multidimensional. This corroborates novel re-inscription of sustainable rural livelihood diversification debate in contemporary development discourse (Warren, 2002) which is a major reinvention to check increasing poverty. According to Warren (2002) sustainable livelihood diversification implies a broader dimension of sustainable livelihood and involves the inclusion of rural sustainable livelihoods framework (Scoones, 1998)to empirically address poverty in the developing areas.

Such diversifications include exploring the dynamic incidence of poverty, livelihood patterns, assets and liabilities of the rural poor (Maxwell, 2010; World Bank, 2015). There are debates in the literature that reinforce the basis for integrative sustainable livelihood (Conroy & Litvinoff, eds., 1988; Chambers & Conway; 1992; Rigg, 2005).

Livelihood diversification underscores a wide range of choices for the rural people to maximize their means of livelihood. It encompasses “livelihood mobility”(Rigg, 2005b).Livelihoods mobility is the movement of people from one means of subsistence to the other within the livelihoods line. Livelihoods diversification is an alternative homegrown livelihood model aimed at multiple means of livelihood. The aim primarily is to broaden the subsistence scope of the rural poor against a narrow reliance on only one means of livelihood. The concept of livelihood diversification is premised on wider schemes for multiple income. This includes a combination of three to five means of livelihoods of farm and non -farm modes of subsistence. It is equally premised on self- reliant initiatives as a shift from external livelihoods programmes. The basis is to deploy a means of livelihood that could provide alternative long term mode of survival. Sustainable rural livelihoods meet the subsistence needs of the present households without tainting the environment or natural resources for the future.

In the Nigerian context, the over reliance on oil economy alone compels the need for livelihoods diversification. In 2002, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)launched the Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development sub-programme. The LDED sub-programme aims at improving the effectiveness of FAO in addressing the needs and interests of poorer people in livelihood diversification programmes and projects. In particular, the Livelihood Support Programme (LSP) of the Food and Agriculture Organization emerged to address rural livelihoods challenges through a more inclusive and integrated poverty reduction strategy

Warren, (2002) concludes that the Livelihoods Diversification & Enterprise Development (LDED) was set up to;

- a. “ Identify and appraise circumstances, inhibiting and enabling factors, and approaches supporting livelihoods diversification and enterprise development;
- b. To catalyze and facilitate use of innovative practices for supporting livelihoods diversification in a range of circumstances;
- c. To increase inter-disciplinarily and learning in fao and partner agencies for supporting livelihoods diversification and enterprise development”

In Nigeria, sustainable rural livelihood has had a sketchy and less revolutionary potential. This is partly because of its connection with the capitalist exploitation and urban dichotomy (See UNDP, 2006). Amadi (2013) for instance, shows that the rural food producers (peasants) are integral part of the wider capitalist exploitation integrated in an unequal scale. Such asymmetrical integration renders the peasants powerless as they could neither define nor resist the dynamics of capitalist exploitation as they reproduce themselves. There are environmental security threats and ecological breakdown in most rural communities arising from capitalist natural resource extraction, notable is the Niger delta region of Nigeria.

Natural disaster such as sea level rise, coastal flooding and inundation are contributory factors. For instance a recent research in the Niger Delta demonstrates the vulnerability of the rural farmers to environmental security threats following the 2012 flooding in the region. This resulted in “early harvesting of root crops, especially cassava and yam to avoid losing them to the flood”(Amadi & Ogonor,2015:58). Policy initiatives to mitigate environmental factors remains central to sustainable rural livelihoods as the subsistence of the rural poor largely relies on the natural environment.

This discourse has been symptomatic of the failure of the post- colonial development to come to terms with perennial challenges of oil induced environmental degradation as in the Niger Delta. There are challenges of rural /urban dichotomy and migration, inequality and poverty and importantly, the need to define a road map for sustainable rural livelihood in development policies and strategies of Nigeria. And in particular alternative sustainable rural empowerment schemes.

Against the background of critiques and commemorative debates, sustainable rural livelihoods scheme is imperative in Nigeria. To reach this research goal, there is need for inclusive bottom top rural livelihoods schemes such as homegrown farm and non-farm livelihoods schemes, rural entrepreneurial and empowerment projects, Small and Medium Scale Entrepreneurs (SMSEs) etc. The study is opened to further research to broaden the scope of sustainable livelihoods studies including the understanding of what sustainable rural livelihoods could mean to various stakeholders.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussions from the foregoing suggest that post- colonial development plans of Nigeria should be redirected to meet the development needs of the rural poor. The paper has shown that although Nigeria had undertaken several rural development schemes, none has been sustainable because they do not have direct bearing on the core existential realities of the rural poor households nor do they evolve from the people.

Much of the development plans in Nigeria as discussed have not deployed a bottom- top approach. Critical evaluation of Nigeria’s development plans between 1960 to 2014 suggests that sustainable livelihood has been elusive both as a development strategy, empowerment scheme and poverty alleviation tool. There is need to understand institutional contexts that facilitate or constrict the rural poor households from emerging out of poverty and in particular, linking them to a more resourceful or sustainable use of the natural environment and its resources. This entails a change in lifestyle and perception of stakeholders on the concept and principles of development in Nigeria.

The paper suggests that, Nigeria urgently needs alternative development strategies that could contribute to systemic empowerment, poverty alleviation and transformation of the rural poor households. The entire line of discussion, point to the urgent need for sustainable rural livelihood as an integral component of inclusive and pro poor development strategy.

Sustainable rural livelihood becomes easily associated with the strategies for preserving local assets for the future and economic empowerment of the rural poor. Key concepts such as rural livelihood diversification, protection against livelihood vulnerability, intra-generational and intergenerational sustainability are relevant in the literature on sustainable livelihood as explicated.

Essentially, this research promotes an understanding of the concept of rural livelihood as an ever evolving approach for transforming the rural poor households. It prioritizes acknowledgement of and

adjustment to human and ecological limits; supports a system-level analysis of the dialectic relationship between the environment, economy and society. In particular demonstrates concern for equity, fairness and participatory democratic decision-making and demands long term economic empowerment.

The goal of sustainable rural livelihood is equally to primarily end poverty, enhance human capacity building and equity (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998). The sustainable livelihoods approach could also result in recommendations that the poor should have a voice in decisions affecting them as this study builds on such views (Narayan, etal; 2000). It is thus, an approach that aims to understand and transform the poor.

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