THE DETERMINANTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In spite of all the orchestrated policies and programmes of Federal, State and Local Governments in the country targeted at checking rural-urban migration, the problem has remained unresolved. This paper, therefore, probes into the determinants and implications of rural-urban migration in Nigeria. The paper adopts the Classical and Neo-classical rural-urban development-related theory and gathered data primarily from books, journal articles and library materials. The paper argues that the imbalance between the rural and urban economic opportunities is the prime determinant of the rate of rural-urban migration. The adoption of serious rural development strategies such as establishment of cottage industries; promotion of mechanized agriculture in rural areas; provision of low-cost houses, electricity, water and other essential socio-economic amenities, will check rural-urban drift.

Keywords: Urbanisation, Migration, Overcrowding, Akwa Ibom State.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria was generally rural in nature during the arrival of the British Colonialists. In spite of this, it is pertinent to emphasize that the traditional headquarters, where the Palaces and the governmental buildings of the Obas in the West, the Emirs in the North and the Igwes in the East located, were urbanized in their local standard. This contention is justified when one recalled that, in these traditional headquarters, there were in existence well-maintained roads, beautiful traditional buildings as well as densely-populated inhabitants.

There was no deliberate policy or programme by the colonial government to develop urban centres and generally provide needed social and economic infrastructures except when that enhanced the exploitation and exportation of primary products. It was the economic activities of the colonialists that led to the emergence of urban centres like Calabar, Lagos, Ibadan, kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, Jos, Aba, Onitsha, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Lokoja, Makurdi and others which later sprang up after independence.

Many factors influenced the decision of the colonial masters to settle down in any town, namely, availability of raw materials for export to Britain to feed their local industries; proximity to coastal areas which could facilitate landing of ships and readily available cheap labour. This selfish economic interest also influenced the construction of railways, airports, seaports, Trunk ‘A’ roads and any other means of communication. For example, the rail line passed through Port Harcourt to Enugu for bulk movement of palm products; to Kano for cotton and groundnuts; and to Ibadan for cocoa and to sea through Lagos to Britain.
According to Okereke (2003:12) “the provision of social amenities under colonial administration was restricted to certain areas…….within the European Quarters otherwise called GRAs.” As a corroboration, Rodney (1972:16), asserts that, “colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profits to the so-called mother-country”. The dominating occupation in our urban centres during this period was “Trading”. There was no development plan for industrialization, no plan for the concomitant urbanization problems. Development plan for any urban centre is very expedient. According to Edward Ayo (1988:1):

Planning involves setting of goals and targets, which have to be pursued through formulation of policies, articulation of appropriate projects and programmes and the mobilization of available financial, human and material resources for their effective realization.

It is the haphazard and plan-less approach that was bequeathed Nigerian indigenous leaders by Colonial Government and this had become the bedrock of urbanization in Nigeria even after Independence in 1960. With this Colonial mentality and influence, the administration of our urban centres had become extremely a herculean task all over Nigeria even up till date. So also is the task of facilitating the transformation of our rural areas to curb rural-urban drift. This justifies the necessity and expediency of this work.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our discussions shall be situated within the rural-urban development related theoretical framework known as “Classical and Neo-classical Model”. According to Essang (1975), the major point postulated in this model is that the growth of any economy, whether rural or urban is a function of capital investment and labour. This model maintains that “capital tends to flow into areas and sectors that guarantee high rate of return while labour migrates into areas characterized by high wage rates” (Essang, 1975:5). The proponents of this model argued that for economic development to occur in the rural areas, there must be measures which will raise the rate of return to capital investment and earning to labour. The model has much relevance in Nigeria where the rural-urban migration of labour and capital from agricultural sector is usually attributed to much lower returns to these factors of production in the rural than urban areas. The critics of this model argued that it ignores the importance of improved quality of labour and improved infrastructures which could contribute to high rates of returns to capital investment. It also ignores institutional and organizational arrangements as well as the crucial role of technology which tends to reduce cost and increase the rate of returns to capital investment, be it in the rural or urban areas.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

(a) The meaning of Rural Area

There is no single definition of a Rural Area. Rather, various characteristics of a rural area are always identified for purpose of comparison with urban area and these characteristics include the size and density of population, dominant occupation, availability of infrastructures and contribution to National Income. According to Oni and Bello (1987:10-11) and as contained in the Encyclopedia of Political Science (page 415) rural area are places that exhibit some or all the under-listed characteristics:-
• Relatively small size and low density of population spread over a large or small geographical area;
• The main occupation of more than 70% of population is farming at subsistence level;
• Non-availability of modern infrastructures like motorable roads, pipe borne water, electricity, health centres and educational institutions;
• Little or no influence of the population on government policies and. The population is sometimes apathetic;
• Low level of per-capita income and general poverty of the population.

(b) The Meaning of Urbanization and Urban Area

Urbanization has been defined by Akin L. Mabogunje (1977:9) as “the process whereby human beings congregate in relatively large number at one particular spot of the earth surface”. He also opined that it “is a universal phenomenon of considerable antiquity”. But Oni and Bello (1987:10) have argued that it is difficult to give one-sentence definition of an urban area, hence they averred that “the best one can do is to give all the main features or characteristics of an urban area as compared to rural area”. Consequently, they identified the under-listed characteristics to help one understand urban area better:

• Large and high density of population within a small or large geographical area;
• Diversity of occupations like industrial activities, commercial undertakings and rendering of services for fees like health, law and engineering, leading to high contribution to national income.
• Availability of modern facilities like health and educational institutions, electricity, water, motorable roads, transport services etc.
• Active participation in politics and government leading to great influence on public policy making through the mass media and through group representatives.
• High level of individualism in terms of struggling to survive.
• Great need for environmental planning to facilitate orderliness in living pattern identification of places and free movement (Oni and Bello, 1987:11)

Oni and Bello (1987) concluded that the “urbaness or ruralness of a place is not a static situation”. Deliberate policies of government can urbanize a rural area. That is why some rural areas in the 1960s and 1970s are fast becoming urbanized due to some economic, social and political or governmental policies which have unintentionally instigated rural-urban migration as well.

4. DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Determinants Of Rural-Urban Migration in Nigeria

Rural-urban migration is a natural phenomenon which involves movement of people from rural areas to more developed urban centres in search of socio-economic betterment. Rural-urban migration in Nigeria dates back to the Colonial era when the British Colonial Masters introduced the use of foreign currency in place of the then means of exchange (“Manilla” in the South Eastern State). So, the guest for this new means of exchange attracted the rural population to the then urban cities. Coupled with this was the introduction of forced labour which the rural-urban migrants were compelled to accept odd jobs in order to be able to pay taxes to the colonial administration using the new currency. The forced labourers were paid meager wages that they could not conveniently cater for themselves and their dependant relatives in the rural areas, thus such relatives were also compelled to move away from rural homes to join their relatives in the urban centres.
The British Colonialists did not encourage the development of the then existing traditional urban centres where the traditional rulers resided with their subjects. Rather, they created new urban areas to satisfy their economic interest. For instance, Enugu, Onitsha, Kaduna, Jos and others were colonialists-oriented urban centres where raw materials were assembled and railed to the nearest sea ports such as Lagos and Port Harcourt from where they were shipped to Britain. The unavoidable effect of this new urban creations was the mass exodus of the inhabitants of the old traditional centres to the new urban centres because their local craftsmanship lacked patronage and they moved to these new urban areas in search of better employment opportunities. The non-provision of social amenities in the old traditional centres compelled the energetic illiterate youths to migrate to new cities. This migration led to the increase of the urban populations. This increase in population in turn generated numerous implications that impeded the politico-cultural as well as socio-economic administration of the urban centres. As asserted by Rodney (1972:224):

The limited social services within Africa during the colonial times were distributed in a manner that reflected the pattern of domination and exploitation. Even if they built railroads, schools, hospitals and the like, the sum total of these services was amazingly small, and were concentrated in their new urban centres.

The abandonment of then rural areas by the colonial masters and the emerging indigenous political leaders as well as the imbalance between rural-urban economic opportunities have remained the major determinants of rural-urban migration in Nigeria.

4.2 Implications of Rural-Urban Migration in Nigeria

The implications of rural-urban migration in Nigeria to the development of both the rural and urban areas of the country are numerous and varied. While the rural areas are experiencing obvious abandonment, under-development, retrogression and under-population due to the massive lost of manpower; the urban areas are exposed to administrative difficulties in provision of services and control of the unexpected influx of immigrants. Some of the appalling physical problems of rapid over-urbanization caused by rural-urban migration have been described by many observers of Nigerian cities. The observations made by Green (1974:22) after his study of the City of Lagos are quite revealing thus, he observed that:

In metropolitan Lagos, Chaotic traffic conditions have now become endemic, demands on the water supply have begun to outstrip its maximum capacity; power cuts have become chronic as industrial and domestic requirements have escalated; public transport has been inundated with problems; port facilities have been stretched to their limits; and congestion of housing and land uses visibly worsened; and the city government has threatened to seize up among charges of corruption, mismanagement and financial incompetence.

The problems identified by Green above are by no means exhaustive nor are the problems limited to Lagos alone. Some of the implications of rural-urban migration have been listed here under. These implications have contributed to the emergence of “subsistence urbanization” in Nigeria. The term “subsistence urbanization” was coined by Breese (1966:3) to refer to: “a situation in which the ordinary citizen has only bare necessities, and
sometimes not even those for survival in the urban environment. This is an urbanization of very high density of individual living under conditions that may be even worse than the rural areas from which they have come.” The implication of rural-urban migration are manifested in the following urbanization problems:-

a) Over-population and Over-crowding

Once there is massive movement of people into one urban area, it automatically implies that the area would be over-crowded and it would have more people than expected to cater for. The area would experience sudden increase in population than what was planned for in the budget (if at all there was budget) and many amenities would become over-stretched and the available places congested. Unfortunately, most Nigerian urban centres, due to their ill-planned nature, failed to provide for this futuristic population growth. This increase has serious implications on politico-cultural as well as socio-economic development of the urban areas as it poses serious challenge to urban planners in solving urbanization problems.

b) Housing Problem

The movement of people from rural areas to urban centres creates housing problems, a type very unfamiliar to the residents of rural areas. There is seldom no clear demarcation of land for residential, commercial and industrial areas (even if there are bye-laws, the urban dwellers do not obey), resulting to a situation where commercial stores exist side by side with residential buildings. It must be emphasized here that the “age” structure of the migrants determines the type of housing need which in turn influences city planners and house designers. Economic condition and the availability of houses affect household size and number. For example, shortage of housing coupled with low income may force people to share living quarters with others, thus, delay marriages and formation of new households. When housing need has consistently outstripped supply, most urban dwellers resort to unfit and unhealthy dwellings, otherwise referred to as slums. This is the situation in most Nigerian urban centres.

c) Environmental Sanitation

Poor environmental sanitation is another major implication of rural-urban migration. Unclean sanitary habit on the part of urban dwellers has often posed a grave problem to the authority. Rural-urban migration implies that urban managers have to devise commendable strategies to keep the area perfectly clean in view of the fact that urban dwellers exhibit dirty attitudes such as dumping of refuse indiscriminately on the streets and inside gutters instead of dust bins. This habit often cause pollution of the environment and generate health hazards such as Cholera epidemics, typhoid fever, malaria and many others. Other factors like industrial wastes, pollution from industrial chimneys and open burning of wastes by the public contribute to complicate health problems in the urban cities, thus, bringing to the fore the need for effective management strategies.

d) Unemployment

Another serious implication is unemployment. When more unemployed citizens rush to urban centres struggling for the few available jobs, the problem of unemployment is unavoidable because majority would be left behind. Most of the young graduates who detest living in rural areas often migrate to these cities to vie for the limited employment
opportunities and those who fail to secure the employment become frustrated and resort to crimes.

e) Crimes and Criminality

One of the implications of rural-urban migration is crime. The frustrated unemployed and under-employed immigrants in urban areas indulge in criminal acts such as armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, drugs, children and women trafficking and other horrible atrocities. Crime prevention has become a herculean task to urban administrators in most recent past due to the character of urban dwellers. In most cases, the urban areas are in dire need of enough manpower to police the whole area to prevent constant breakdown of law and order.

f) Food Scarcity

Rural-urban migration implies that there would be a reduction in food production in the rural areas. Consequently, food supply to the cities would reduce leading to acute scarcity and sharp increase in prices of food.

g) Shortage of other basic social amenities

Another implication is the unavoidable inadequacy of available health and educational facilities, shortage of water, electricity supply and many others. These facilities are often choked up and rendered insufficient due to over-population caused by migration and multiple births in the urban centres.

h) Illegal Structures and Slums

The migration of people from rural to urban areas contributes to the springing up of illegal structures in most part of the cities. In a desperate attempt to provide the much needed shelter, the immigrants indulge in this illegal activity and some resort to creating slums with its attendant indiscipline and crimes. Corroborating this fact, Clinard (1970:28) asserts that:-

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\text{Slums have commonly been defined as those portions of cities in which housing is crowded, neglected, deteriorated and often obsolete. Many of the inadequate housing conditions could be attributed to poorly arranged structures, inadequate light and circulation, poor design and lack of sanitary facilities, overcrowding and inadequate maintenance.}
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i) Tax Evasion

The movement of the rural dwellers to urban areas implies that the tax payment could easily be evaded due to impersonal relationship that exists between these heterogeneous groups who migrated into the cities. Tax evasion is not high in rural areas because of close monitoring by village and family heads. Also the migration of these tax payers from the rural areas reduces the amount of revenue often generated in the villages thereby robbing them of enough funds for their transformation process.
Another implication of rural-urban migration in Nigeria is the problem of narrow and ill-maintained urban roads as well as unplanned urban transportation system which often result to traffic congestion. The traffic situation gets worse daily as the number of vehicles plying the roads increases. This implies that the existing roads must be expanded, buildings on the right of ways pulled down and compensations paid to owners of the building. There is therefore, serious need for new urban plans which would provide for sufficient number of motor parks, training of more traffic officials and adequate funds for effective administration of the area to curb these problems. The appraisal of the administration of urbanization problems in Uyo Township would highlight more of these problems.

The typical case in time perspective of the administration of urbanization problems is the case of Uyo city in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Uyo became the capital city of Akwa Ibom State when the State was created in September 23rd, 1987. The present population of Uyo capital city is not yet determined, but by the Census figure published in 2007, the entire Uyo Local Government Area has 209,573 people, made up of 153,113 males and 156,460 females. As at now, Uyo capital city, which has other part of Uruan, Ibiono Ibom, Itu, Ibesikpo and Etinan Local Government Areas carved out and added to the former Uyo Township, has witness tremendous transformation. Its former nature of rural local government headquarters has metamorphosed into a Municipality with many modern roads such as dualized Ikot Ekpene Road, dualized Aka Road, dualized Oron road, many flyovers and recently new Ring Road Three (President Jonathan Boulevard) which have completely changed the esthetic of the city.

Although it is generally believed that life in this urban city is more worthwhile than that in a rural area because of the provision of the basic necessity of life like water, electricity, educational institutions, medical facilities, shopping centres and others; its management is fraught with much problems. Due to influx of migrants from the rural areas of the state to the capital city, the urbanization problems which have prominently enveloped all the old urban centres in Nigeria are visibly noticed in Uyo.

Problems such as overcrowding, poor sanitation, frequent power failure, poor housing, flooding, poor mass transport system currently overwhelmed by Tricylists (Keke Napep Riders) still pose great concern to the authorities of Uyo Capital City Development Authority and Uyo Local Government Council. Just like most other urban centres in Nigeria, Uyo Township was ill-planned and all the transformation attempts by the present state government have not yet solved the problems of over-crowding and congestion posed by rural-urban migration.

Enough access roads are yet to be opened and efforts by authority to open new urban roads or expand the existing ones are often resisted by town dwellers because it would entail pulling down of some buildings and displacement of some people. Under this condition, government is compelled to negotiate with the landlords for compensation which would be into thousands of naira and may not be easy to come by. A good example of this took place recently along Ikot Ekpene Uyo road which is under dualization, near the Ibiono Ibom axis, after the Civil Service Training Centre. Not long ago, the Tricyclists (Keke Napep operators) demonstrated against increase in daily tariff imposed by the authority concerned. The demonstration led to the reduction of the tariff from four hundred naira to two hundred naira per day by the authority. Already, the tricyclists have been restricted from flying through some area (like Ibom Plaza) of the township to avoid traffic congestion. As more construction companies continue to handle more construction works in the town, for instance the Ibom Tropicana Entertainment Centre, the Uyo International Olympic Stadium and many
urban roads, rural-urban migration intensifies. The population of the urban area has become so dense that the existing houses are not enough to house everybody. As a result of this increase in population, shanty areas (slums) have been created along Abak Road axis, Mbiabong Etoi axis, Itam axis and Aka-Itiam-Etinan axis with their attendant problems of poor sanitation, over crowding, indiscipline and crimes. Most of the basic facilities like water supply, electricity, medical facilities are choked up because demand has outstripped supply. Efforts by the authorities like Akwa Ibom Water Company, Ibom Power Plant and Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company to improve on the supply of these basis needs have not been very much encouraging because of inadequate finance and lack of executive capacity to execute the projects.

Lack of improved sanitary habits on the part of the urban dwellers has posed a grave problem to the authorities. In most cases the Uyo Capital Development Authority and the State Ministry of Environment as well as Uyo Local Government Council have devised commendable plans to keep the urban area perfectly clean, but due to the dirty attitude of the town dweller, their efforts have always been frustrated. Although these authorities have provided dust bins at strategic places, but more often than not, people do not use them. They prefer to deposit refuse indiscriminately on the streets and inside gutters thereby polluting the entire place. The authorities have gone as far as enacting series of bye-laws making it an offence punishable by heavy fines, but this has not had any impact on the sanitary habits of the people. Gutters have been cleared by the urban authorities so that they do not constitutes breeding grounds for mosquitoes. But after few hours after the clearance, some unscrupulous people dump more refuse into these gutters thereby blocking the easy flow of water in them. This often result to flooding during heavy rainfall as well as pollution and rapid multiplication of mosquitoes.

The Uyo Urban managers have not been able to meet up with the medical needs of the teeming population in the urban centre. The major health facilities like the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital, the Anua General Hospital and the Itung Mbang General Hospital are complemented by several private clinics in the municipality. But these are not enough to cater for the large population. As a result of this inadequacy in medical facilities, quack hospitals spring up. The state government has taken action to arrest this situation by constructing a new International Hospital (known as the 25th Anniversary hospital) which would handle all types of sicknesses including kidney transplant, heart surgery and cancer treatment which are often treated abroad. The intervention by the state government is seen as a relief to Uyo Local Government Council whose medical facilities (Health Centres) are under-staffed and in most cases they have no drugs.

Educationally, the Uyo urban authorities have not been able to cope up with the over-increasing number of school enrolment arising from the free education policy introduced by the state government. Although almost all the primary schools in the town have been renovated with red roofs by the state government, most of the schools in this urban area still lack basic instructional and recreational facilities like chairs, writing materials, libraries, science laboratories and toilet facilities. Yet these are the responsibilities of all urban councils (Uyo Local Government Council inclusive) but the council has not been able to perform this due to lack of finance.

The state government also intervened to reduce the socio-economic problems which the old Uyo Main Market generated. The increase in number of traders rendered the market too small for trading and this led to the extension of the market to Etuk Street and Aka road thereby causing serious traffic jams along these urban streets. A new Akpan Andem Urban markets was constructed after the demolition of the old Uyo Village market and compensation paid to traders. Inspite of this, the Uyo Municipality is still in dire need of two new markets to stop illegal trading along major streets in the town. Also, four new motor parks have been constructed along Oron road, IKot Ekpene road, Ibesikpo road and Abak
road to stop illegal private motor parks. Inspite of these administrative actions, motorists refused to use these motor parks until they were recently compelled to comply by the State Ministry of Transport. Crime prevention has proved a herculean task to Uyo urban administrators in the most recent past due to the character of urban dwellers.

As a result of unemployment in the urban area, the incidence of armed robbery, kidnapping, children and women trafficking and other horrible atrocities have been perpetuated in the urban centre without the authorities providing immediate answers to the problems. Urban dwellers flout the laws with reckless abandon despite efforts by the law enforcement officers to enforce the series of state laws and bye-laws enacted by the urban council and statutory urban management agencies. In most cases, the urban council has no adequate manpower to police the whole area with the result that there is a constant break down of law and order. To over-come most of these urbanization problems, solutions have been proffered at the end of this work.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In Nigeria today, the prime determinant of rural-urban migration is the imbalance between the rural and urban economic opportunities. It is pertinent to reiterate that the genesis of rural-urban migration in the country would be incomplete without reference to the footprints of the British colonial masters. Based on the legacy they bequeathed the indigenous Nigerian leaders, most urban cities in the country have remained ill-planned in spite of all attempts to modernize them. Precautionary measures were not taken to curb futuristic urbanization problems like overpopulation and overcrowding, unemployment; crimes; housing insufficiency, water and food shortage; inadequate health and educational facilities; inelastic electricity supply; poor urban roads; illegal settlements and shanty slums; poor environmental sanitation and chaotic urban transportation system. All these have constituted the implications of rural-urban migration in Nigeria and should not be allowed to persist in this 21st century.

To check rural-urban migration, mechanized agricultural farms and large poultry farms should be established in our rural areas to substitute the present subsistent farms with a view to attracting and retaining the youths and elders to participate and contribute effectively to agricultural production, enough for domestic use and for export. Also, cottage industries that would utilize the local raw materials like cassava, palm oil, palm kernel, rubber, cocoa and others to produce consumable goods should be located in rural areas to generate employment for our young graduates thus stemming rural-urban drift. Essential socio-economic amenities like constant electricity supply; potable water; good houses; hospitals; transportation; schools; communication and entertainment centers should be provided in rural areas to encourage the inhabitants to ignore urban centers and settle down in our rural communities.

In order to reduce the problems of urbanization highlighted in this work, new urban centers, which are duly planned and budgeted for, should be developed to replace all the ill-planned colonial urban centres which have refused to succumb to all modernization strategies. The federal and state governments should come to the aid of the urban local Government councils and the statutory management agencies by providing them with adequate grants for use in the administration of the cities, especially, ameliorating the myriad urbanization problems. Moreover, the urban councils and management agencies should intensify their internal revenue generation efforts to supplement the state and federal government grants. Most importantly, they should eschew corruption and make prudent and accountability their watch words.

The staff of the various urban councils and Agencies should be properly motivated to discharge their functions effectively. Laws to back up environmental sanitation should be
put in place and the urban dwellers duly enlightened through campaigns on the need to keep
their surroundings clean. Environmental sanitation enforcement officers should be re-
introduced to embark upon house to-house enforcement of the laws and punishment of
offenders. Crime prevention should be given utmost attention. Our urban areas do not only
need effective planning but also long-term planning, thus, the adoption of three to five years
Development Rolling Plan is highly recommended for them.

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