From Agriculture to Petroleum Oil Production: What Has Changed about Nigeria’s Rural Development?

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Abstract

Rural development in Nigeria has been at the core of public policies over the past ten decades beginning from the colonial up to the post-independence arrangements. The main objective of the study was to make a comparative assessment of the practical impact of long years of policy practice produced on Nigeria’s rural areas within the context of two distinguishing economic periods characterized by agricultural production and petroleum oil exploration. The study used a range of secondary materials including the review of relevant literature, analysis of development policy documents, national development plans, local publications and discussions with relevant experts and academics as a way of gaining ideas and opinion to support discussions. The results showed that rural development in Nigeria has not been successful whether viewed from the perspectives of agricultural development or oil resource exploration. While a number of factors such as political instability, corruption and long years of colonial exploitation have been discussed as important factors that work against rural transformation, the paper argues that rural development in Nigeria over the years has not been a conscious policy practice; but largely subsumed under various sectorial and infrastructural policies. The implication of these findings is that the challenge of developing Nigeria’s rural areas does not lie on the various agricultural development policies discussed neither does it depend on the exploration of oil resources. The challenge of leadership, absence of institutional capacity and political commitments are the main factors working against the development of rural areas.
Nigeria's proven oil reserves are estimated to be 36 billion barrels; natural gas reserves are well over 100 trillion cubic feet. Nigeria is a member of the organization of petroleum exporting countries (OPEC), and its current crude oil production averages around 1.6 million barrels per day. Poor corporate relations with indigenous communities, vandalism of oil infrastructure, severe ecological damage, and personal security problems throughout the Niger Delta, oil-producing region, continue to plague Nigeria's oil sector. In the absence of coherent government programs, the major motivational oil charges will be made in the event of withdrawal after the manuscript has been published.