

## CONSTITUTIONAL ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS AND CHALLENGES OF RURAL CAPACITY BUILDING IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Many rural areas in Nigeria have not received adequate attention they need on all grounds based on the extant review of the literature. The 'rural' scorecard on capacity development and economic growth gets poorer compared to the urban centre. This implies that polity, economy, education, infrastructure and health do not match up to the needs of the rural areas. These issues are adduced to zero political will, lack of manpower development, rural-urban migration, corruption, low rural participatory framework to mention but a few. It is against this backdrop that this paper reviewed stakeholders' constitutional roles and their challenges in rural capacity building in Nigeria. The author reviewed the existing body of knowledge and adopted the transformative learning theory as its theoretical consideration. It was reasoned that stakeholders are rather not performing their constitutional duties to the assigned and this affects rural capacity building in Nigeria. It was evident that the politics of selfishness and stomach infrastructure also keep rural capacity building at low ebb in Nigeria. To arrest this situation, it is suggested that the government and private organisations should team up to provide, support, monitor and supervise activities in the rural areas to enhance rural capacity building.*

**Keywords:** *Capacity Building, Constitutional, Rural Capacity Building, Stakeholders*

### **Introduction**

The pace of development in the rural settings in Nigeria remains at lower ebb compared to the urban areas. This is why these settings continue to receive considerable attention from all tiers of governments. The lack of fast-pace development has accentuated massive rural-urban migration, thereby depriving rural areas the capacity they need to support their development against existing odds. To address the challenges of low

capacity building, stakeholders must play constitutional role to change the fate of the neglected rural area of the country (Kamar, Lawal, Babangida & Jahun, 2014).

According to the existing body of knowledge (Egbe, 2014; Adebayo, Awodun & Ajonbadi, 2015; Saulawa, Danjuma, Musa & Haruna, 2017; Amakom, Madukwe & Dimelu, 2020), many factors contribute to the state of

underdevelopment in rural Nigeria. These are not but limited to policy failure, non-involvement of rural people in projects, rural-urban migration, lack of autonomy, government lackadaisical attitude towards rural projects and corruption among the rural development stakeholders. Others are lack of monitoring and supervision, lack of training on innovation and lack of interest of the rural people in key projects. All these factors separately and jointly impede rural capacity building and development in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Marre & Weber (2010) see human capacity building as a core aspect of development in any nation which must be given utmost attention in rural Nigeria. This area known for meeting the agricultural needs of the general populace deserves better structures, infrastructures and other initiatives to support the emancipation of its people. As spelt out in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 7 (1), and (3), the concern of local government is to ensure grassroot development from rural-based activities, coupled with the support received from both the state and federal government (Garuba & Ameen, 2017; Saulawa, Danjuma, Musa & Haruna, 2017). On this note, little or nothing can be seen as developmental progress.

Adebayo, Awodun & Ajonbadi (2015) aver that the rural percentage of the total population in Nigeria is put at 49.16% which acknowledged the significance of the rural communities to the development of the country. The development plan is made difficult because of the concentration of the pool of resources in the development of urban

centres alone while the rural areas are neglected. In this vein, the economic outlook report of the World Bank (2014), confirmed that poverty reduction and developmental efforts are primarily urban focused in Nigeria. Hence, the growth of rural areas is slower while poverty remains higher and poverty reduction is slower. Kamar, Lawal, Babangida & Jahun (2014) therefore, note that neglect of rural infrastructure affects the general economic condition of its inhabitants.

In recognition of the highlighted challenges, the adopted strategy in many developing nations for the protection of the poor rural people includes efforts to strengthen access to credit facilities, access to farm tools through saving schemes, training facilities for youth entrepreneurship and others (Monchuk, 2014; Banerjee & Jackson, 2017; Singh & Chudasama, 2020). Specifically, Nigeria governments have instituted various programmes to empower grassroot people in the area of capacity building to manage and support their developmental processes (Trettin & Welter, 2011; Adebayo, Awodun & Ajonbadi, 2015; and Amakom, Madukwe & Dimelu, 2020). These programmes have been initiated since 1970 and are aimed at targeting rural areas development.

Prominent among such programmes were Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986; Better Life for Rural Women in 1987, Community Action Programme for Poverty Alleviation (CAPPA) in 1996, Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) 1999; National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2001, National

Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004, State Loan Implementation Committee (SLIC) in 2006, National Programme for Food Security (NPFS) in 2007 among others (Amakom, Madukwe & Dimelu, 2020; Ozoh, Metu, Stephen & Madueke, 2020). Due to the aforementioned, this paper discusses, extensively, the roles played by constitutional stakeholders and their challenges towards rural dwellers capacity building in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Consideration**

Review of the existing body of knowledge justified the availability of numerous theories applicable to the focus of this paper, but it will be suicidal to apply all in this discourse. Collectively, these theories are not but limited to diffusion of innovations, transformational learning theory, ecological model, capacity assessment theory and prevention, developmental evaluation model, and community leadership theory (Bergeron, Abdi, DeCorby, Mensah, Rempel & Manson, 2017). Out of these pools of theories (after critical examination), the author deemed fit to adopt the transformational learning theory as the theoretical base for this paper. This is justifiable because the theory acknowledges the state of rural capacity building, and how best it can be improved in rural Nigeria.

Transformative learning theory is a viable and applicable theory of learning other than Albert Bandura's social learning theory. This theory was developed by Jack Mezirow in the 90s and it focused on young adult learning and adult education. According to Mezirow,

students had important teaching-learning opportunities connected to their past experiences which can only be transformed through critical reviews and teachings. In other words, Mezirow's transformative learning is seen as an orientation that learners interpret and reinterpret their experience based on its meaning in their lives, how social structures influence such experiences, and how the dynamics involved in modifying meanings undergo changes when learners find it dysfunctional (Mezirow, 1991).

Buttressing further, there are seven phases of transformative learning which help learners transform their prior notions as they get updated with new insights. These are; disorienting dilemma, self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, planning a course of action, acquisition of knowledge to implement new plans, experimenting with new roles, and building self-efficacy in new roles and relationships (Howie & Bagnall, 2013; Christie, Carey, Robertson & Grainger, 2015).

Disorienting dilemma is the genesis for transformative learning where the learner was made to discover wrong thoughts or inaccurate information held onto from the past. This process is the breaking down of wrong information from the minds of the learners to give room for the accurate information newly introduced. At this point, learners examine their belief system and understanding about past experiences and how they can connect to this new development. This is the period learners have critically assessed earlier assumptions, making it easy for a smooth transitioning to the new mode of learning

Planning a course of action comes in right after the conviction has been made to move from the old ways to the new learning process. It is at this stage that students will adopt strategies for learning new things, adapt and apply it where necessary. In fact, learners standing on the knowledge acquired would make them to explore new roles within and outside the academic settings. Against all odds, transformational learning therefore, enable learners to build confidence in new beliefs and understanding to begin to function better in any given system.

In connection with the discourse, it is important to understand the peculiarities of rural people in a given setting to fully enable the successful transition of any new idea, skill, and knowledge. In that plight, disorienting dilemma as advocated by Mezirow (1991) is very important for rural Nigerians to permeate their system with reasons to accept the new skill set. This can only be achieved through a participatory approach of engaging all the constitutional stakeholders on capacity building activities and its importance for national building. These rural people will thence evaluate the information received from their traditional leaders in connection with their former skillset before accepting the new development. After the overall discussion at different local forums, plans made on how to acquire such knowledge will be read out by the constitutional stakeholders.

Without the will power and assurance of the rural people, capacity building initiative cannot be successful in any rural setting. In essence, the

acceptance of the new development by rural people will, therefore, make the motive of capacity building achievable by public-private enterprises and non-governmental agencies. Other notable challenges to the success of capacity building for constitutional stakeholders to consider will be zero political will in rural projects, economic needs of participants, direct access to funds, corruption, infrastructural setbacks, and lack of efficient communication channel.

### **Rural Nigeria, Constitutional Stakeholders and Capacity Building**

Rural Nigeria is often times described in the literature as neglected areas in the country owing to her level of growth and development compared to urban centres with good infrastructures, improved health care infrastructures (public-private), road networks, good water supply, electricity to mention but a few (UNDP, 2013; Egbe, 2014; and Adebayo, Awodun & Ajonbadi, 2015; Lawal, Obileye & Bakare, 2019). By classification, rural Nigeria is relatively a quiet place of low population density, limited infrastructure, where its' occupants have the same cultural identities and they depend mainly on natural resources for livelihood in a concentrated geographical space (Jamshed, Birkmann, Feldmeyer & Rana, 2020).

Furthermore, Anele (2012) states that, "life in rural Nigeria is hard, rustic and sometimes inhuman". The studies of Paul, Agba & Amp; Chukwura (2014) also reveal 70% of rural dwellers are traumatized by poverty, high illiteracy rate, unsafe drinking water, sanitation

issues and diseases prevalence. The statuses above are proven factors of structural weaknesses in contrast to urban centres in Nigeria. In consonance, National Bureau of Statistics (2020) revealed unemployment rate among rural dwellers rose from 23.9% to 28% while underemployment rate moved from 22.8% to 31.5%.

As used in this paper, constitutional stakeholders are those individuals, bodies, and organisations saddled with the responsibilities to ensure rural planning, growth and development in Nigeria. In other words, rural constitutional stakeholders are rural people, traditional leaders, the local government and other constituencies attached to rural administration in Nigeria (Keulder, 2010). Collectively these stakeholders play different roles at different times as discussed in the subsequent section.

Lastly, Ogechukwu (2011) and Olagbaju (2020) describe capacity building as key drivers for self-reliance, empowerment, entrepreneurial development, and national development. The authors saw capacity building as the ability to enable people, groups, or nation utilize their creative potentials, leadership abilities, and intellectual capacities for self and national interest. In the view of Nwazor (2012), capacity building is the process of planning for people to acquire knowledge and advanced skills crucial to an individual's empowerment, their standard of living and country's economic growth. Nonetheless, the individuals regardless of their socio-demographic and biological make up (sex, age, ethnic, occupation and religion) must possess

some sets of skills for effective service delivery. To build more capacity and enhance availability and accessibility to infrastructural facilities in rural Nigeria, the constitutional stakeholders from the earliest time have played different roles.

### **Constitutional Roles of Stakeholders in Rural Nigeria's Capacity Building**

The pivotal role of constitutional stakeholders can be best looked at from the rural people, the first in the chain, who needs the emancipation and empowerment. It is simply their open-mindedness and acceptance of this initiative that determines the success of the whole capacity building process. This exercise is often successful where high-rank stakeholders in the community are carried along accordingly (Aref, 2011). According to Johansen & Chandler (2015), traditional leaders play vital roles in the acceptance of any rural development initiative. Their role is to shape people's perceptions and acceptance of ideas and policies needed to enhance rural capacity building.

Saulawa, Danjuma, Musa & Haruna (2017) established that the local government administration was created as the third tier of government with the responsibility of ensuring grassroot development through their activities and financial support received from both governmental and non-governmental organisations. Constitutionally, their duties and responsibilities were spelt out to coordinate the activities of the local government (Garuba & Ameen, 2017).

According to Akhakpe, Fatile & Igbokwe-Ibeto, (2012) and Abdullahi &

Chikaji (2017), the major issue affecting the performance of local government has been her dependence on other levels of government for resource allocation and support. In fact, the joint relationship between the state government and the local government as spelt out in the 1999 Constitution as amended continues to limit the chances of the local government for optimum performance, especially, in the area of rural capacity building (Bolatito & Ibrahim, 2012). At the extreme, the poor performance of constitutional stakeholders in rural settings have necessitated the proliferation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to support the growth of rural areas and the capacity building of its citizenry (Ngeh, 2013; Hashim, Sidi, Abubakar, Umar, Aliero & Yelwa, 2020).

### **Challenges of Stakeholders in Rural Nigeria's Capacity Building**

Rural Nigeria faces diverse challenges related to population changes, capital access, workforce development, infrastructure, communication, road network, education, health, land use and preservation compared to the urban centres on better standing (Raheem & Bako, 2014; Johnson & Ifeoma, 2018; Adelabu, 2019). To improve the understanding of these challenges, it is imperative to reveal the constraints from the angle of rural people as participants, rural leaders as facilitators, and rural companies as interventionists respectively.

According to Isife, Nnodim & Ochomma (2009) and Amakom, Madukwe & Dimelu (2020), rural people lack the financial capacity to improve their quest to

acquire new skills. These issues are majorly related to their basic needs, how to get to the training centres, and the funds to purchase equipment needed for the entire learning process. To crown it all, these participants lack adequate enlightenment to reject their superstitious beliefs and embrace the new skills, ideas, and knowledge for their emancipation.

The cooperative partners also make matters worse with perverse incentives for staff to develop the participants' capacity. These limitations are through the use of obsolete materials/equipment, non-availability of boarding facilities, inadequate teaching-learning materials, poor wages and salaries of instructors. Due to the awkward state of the rural system for capacity building, staff prioritised private businesses over official duties (Kaka, 2018). At the extreme, most of the instructors engaged for rural capacity building are rather not qualified. These confirmed the lackadaisical attitude of the Nigerian government to rural issues.

However, the rural capacity depends on external bodies for assistance to edge over the highlighted issues. In the end, poor monitoring and supervision will make all the efforts of the external bodies futile, since they are not capable of enhancing rural development in totality. Lack of financial resources for the rural companies to run as a result of insufficient/embezzlement of funds from cooperative society, insufficient logistic support, an uncontrolled inflow of rural allocation and compensation, withdrawal of sponsorship, lack of proper allocation and distribution of funds (Amakom, Madukwe & Dimelu, 2020) are also part

of the problems. Other challenges that made rural companies less functional are not but limited to poor power supply, poor maintenance culture, poor water supply, insufficient turnover, poor transportation facilities, lack of training on innovation, and managerial malfunctioning, production and distribution.

Moreover, there exist certain constitutional limitations as highlighted by Agbani & Ugwoke (2014); and Garuba & Ameen (2017). It is revealed by Garuba & Ameen (2017) that the expectations from local government stakeholders are limited constitutionally because the third tier of government lack the autonomy needed to achieve rural transformation and development. Section 162(6) of the 1999 constitution provided for the running of joint accounting system by the state government and local government for instance. This has, therefore, incapacitated local government administrators who are mandated to receive approval from state government before funds can be made available and utilized for their desired purposes. At the extreme, Agbani & Ugwoke (2014) confirmed the embezzlement and mismanagement of local government funds by the state governors as a major impediment to the development of rural areas. Until all these challenges affecting stakeholders are addressed, little or nothing can be achieved on rural capacity building in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The state of rural Nigeria today is enough indicator to justify the roles played by constitutional stakeholders on rural capacity building but we cannot overlook

the challenges affecting their performances. These issues can be drawn from both the stakeholders and the outside players. The rural constitutional stakeholders seem to lack access to infrastructural and financial facilities while the outside players seem lackadaisical about rural capacity building due to long-existing structural deficiencies in the area. As such, they are encouraged by the government to pump their pool of resources to urban centres as against the areas that need overall turn-around structurally, technologically and intellectually.

This paper, therefore, concluded that a sound relationship between constitutional stakeholders and its financiers such that no capacity building exercise will be embarked upon by either the government or non-governmental agencies without engaging the local people. At the federal level, the government should support rural capacity building exercises by advocating for separate financial intervention pool for rural people through international organisations, especially World Bank, and African Development Bank.

From the government standpoint, there is a need for proper orientation, re-orientation and motivation for all constitutional stakeholders to support the course of rural capacity building which needs training, empowerment, and mentorship at different levels. In other words, they should re-integrate vocational training skills into rural agenda; build more incubator centres and arrange special training programmes for rural people. Ministry of local government at

the state level should be more involved in initiating programmes that enhance rural capacity building and their general welfare.

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