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Keywords: *strategic options, agricultural/ rural develop-ment sub-sahara africa.*

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Strategic Options for Agricultural and Rural Development Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa: the Case of Nigeria

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I. Introduction

The contemporary movement of people to urban communities in sub-Sahara Africa is proceeding at an unprecedented rate. The economic stagnation of rural communities appears to justify this migration. Nearly 2 billion people in developing societies survive on agricultural pursuits. Over 3.1 billion people live in rural areas in 2010, a quarter of them in extreme poverty (Todaro & Smith, 2011). According to Todaro and Smith, "people living in the countryside make up more than half of the population of such diverse Latin American and Asian nations as Haiti, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Honduras, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Thailand and China. In sub-Sahara Africa, the ratios are much higher, with rural dwellers constituting 65% of the total population".

Over two thirds of the world's poorest people are located in rural areas and engaged primarily in subsistence agriculture. Their basic concern is survival. The rural dwellers in most societies have been bypassed by the economic progress recorded by their nations. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization estimated that in 2009, over 1 billion people did not have enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs (Ostrom, 2010). For self sustaining development to occur, rural areas and agricultural sector must be integral. The fundamental problems of poverty, gender inequality, rapid population growth are all traceable to the stagnating and retrogressive economic life in rural areas. Agriculture, providing 60 percent of all employment constitutes the backbone of most African economies. It is still the largest contributor to GDP; the biggest source of foreign exchange, still accounting for about 40 percent of the country's hard currency earnings; and the main generator of savings and tax revenues. The agricultural sector is the dominant provider of industrial raw materials with about two-thirds of manufacturing value-added in most African countries being based on agricultural materials. Agriculture thus remains cardinal for economic growth in sub-Sahara Africa (Alabi, 2008).

Development economists agree that far from playing a passive, supporting role in the process of economic development, the agricultural sector in particular and the rural economy in general must play an indispensable part in any overall strategy of economic progress in sub-Saharan Africa. In this region, the population was predicted to grow from 770 million in 2005 to 1.5 billion in 2050. Despite rapid migration from countryside to cities and the growth in urban population, the absolute number of rural people is also rising, thus making rural development a necessity (Anderson, 2001). According to United Nations Economic commission for Africa (1974) rural development is "a process by which a set of technical, social, cultural and institutional measures are implemented with and for the inhabitants of rural areas with the aim of improving their socio economic conditions in order to achieve harmony and balance both on the regional and national levels". It means a radical "transformation of the rural areas, alleviation of rural poverty and enhancement of the quality of rural life, productivity and income" (Mabogunje, 1990). To a large extent, therefore, agriculture and rural development have come to be regarded by many economists as the sine qua non of national development in sub-Saharan Africa generally and Nigeria in particular. Rural development is an integrated approach to food production as well as physical, social and institutional infrastructural provisions with an ultimate goal of bringing about both quantitative and qualitative changes which result in improved living standard of the rural population. It

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therefore, infers that agricultural production (development) is a component of rural development as more than two-third of Nigeria's citizens are farmers. They live in an estimated 97,000 rural communities. Their lives are characterized by misery, poverty, morbidity and underdevelopment (Ekpo & Olaniyi, 1995).

II. State of Agriculture and Rural Development in Nigeria

According to Idachaba (1985) "the response of the first independent civilian government to the challenges of national development in general and rural development in particular, as articulated in the First National Development Plan 1962 – 68 was to a large extent a carry over of the colonial notions". In that Plan, rural development was equated with increased output of agriculture and other related primary produce. As a strategy to achieve this goal, the Southern Regional Governments carried out farm settlements strategy patterned after the Israel Kibbutzim, with a focus on young school leavers. Northern Region retained colonial strategy of extension services. However, both strategies could not transform Nigeria's rural economy. The end of the civil war provided opportunity for implementation of rural development programme responsive to rural needs. However, the Second National Development Plan (1970 – 74) did not depart from previous one with regards to rural development. Rural development was still conceived in the context of agricultural expansion (Adalemo & Baba, 1993).

Rural Development Policy was subsumed under the Third Development Plan, 1975 – 1980. The objective of rural development was to increase rural agricultural productivity and income, diversify rural economy and enhance quality of rural life. The policy still pursued agriculture and rural development simultaneously. Interestingly, human welfare parameters were specifically built into the rural development process. It drew attention to the need to mitigate rural-urban disparities in living standards (Matthew-Daniels, 2000). World Bank (2011) reported that "the percentage of rural population in Nigeria has gone down from 53.3 percent in 2000 to 49.7 percent in 2010 due to migration and urbanization". The rural areas, where agriculture is the mainstay of all people support 70-80 percent of total population including the extreme poor and undernourished. Improvement in agriculture can increase rural incomes and purchasing power.

In the 1970s, development was re-conceptualised. Attention was substantially paid on man and welfare parameters as balanced diet, good water supply, access to health care facilities, adequate educational facilities, shelter etc as the essence of rural development. Strategies and programmes were embarked upon by government. Integrated Rural Development (IRD) started in mid-seventies at Funtua and Gusau, later renamed Agricultural Development Project (ADP) (Ihejiamaizu, 2002). The proliferation of ADPs in the 70s and early eighties as the main channels for the distribution of basic infrastructure attested to its success of this strategy.

In 1976 River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) were established. The country was divided into eleven regions. The regions initiated regional development through better management of land and water resources; to produce more food and thus more income and better standards of living (Ogbuagu, 1995). Large scale irrigation schemes were set up in different parts of the country during the 1970s. Other measures targeted at rural development at this time included Operation Feed the Nation, the Local Government Reforms, the Green Revolution and programmes of rural electrification (Adalemo & Baba, 1993). The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was established to spearhead the coordination and implementation of rural development programme. One of its mandates was "promotion of enhanced agriculture production through provision of required infrastructure and facilities for agriculture produce. Through an integrated approach to rural development, DFRRI was expected to raise the standard of living of the rural population on a sustainable basis. The Better Life for rural Women Programme (BLP) focused on the development of women as a catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria's rural areas.

The establishment of Peoples Bank fostered the growth of cooperative societies. The Bank was established based on the Asian model to provide banking services to rural areas. In 1994, Petroleum Trust Fund was created as a domestic intervention and development agency with the mandate to intervene and support government in the provision of essential infrastructure, facilities and health services such as health care, education and transportation. The PTF focused on the implementation of projects and programmes that are rural based to enhance the wellbeing of the populace. The Family Economic Advancement Programme was meant to stimulate activity in rural areas by addressing factors that impede economic growth and development. The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) set up latter changed to National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as a strategy to implement its rural development programme. It focused on agriculture, roads, environment, health care delivery, education etc (Nkpoyen, 2012).

National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS), a collaboration between FAO and the Government of Nigeria was based on food sovereignty, "a concept that national human rights institution recognizes as right of every citizen of a country to food" (Nigeria Government, 2007). The Second National Fadama Development Project (NFDP-II) is also a

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collaborative programme with the World Bank and rural development that is based on the capabilities of the rural populace. The project was expected to increase the capacity of beneficiaries to manage economic activities, develop rural infrastructure etc (IFPRI, 2008).

Nigeria signed the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and developed the National Economic and Development Strategies (NEEDS) in 2002, a replica of the MDGs. NEEDS' objectives were expressed in agencies like Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme which provides loan for the farmers, Nigeria Agricultural Insurance Corporation, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) (Nigeria Govt., 2007). Community Based Agriculture and Rural Development Programme (CBARDP), a collaboration between Federal Government of Nigeria and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was established in 2003. The programme was meant to improve the livelihood and living conditions of rural communities with emphasis on women and other vulnerable groups living in the area. The goal was pursued through the components of awareness and capacity building and community development (Nigeria Govt., 2007).

Fadesere (2011) commented that despite the vast achievement from agricultural and rural development programmes in the last three decades on food security 6 percent of the population which is about 9.8 million people is still undernourished and poverty level is about 54.7 percent with majority of them in the rural sector. Nigeria economy is preponderantly rural based. However, "the nexus between the development of the rural sector and the economy as a whole was not sufficiently tied. Rural development was not given the priority and attention, it deserves (Anam, 2014). Successive administrations pledged to improve the lot of Nigeria's rural population, not much was done to ensure that the development of the rural sector was central to, national development efforts. In 2008, Nigeria devoted 4.6% of its federal budget to agriculture. This was, however, below the 10% objective set in the Maputo Commitment signed in 2003 (Grandval & Duiller, 2011).

The 2008 National Food Security Programme (NFSP) was designed to attain food security by ensuring that all Nigerians have access to good quality food while making Nigeria a major exporter of food stuffs. The programme designated priority crops (cassava, rice, millet, wheat) for achieving food security. The strategic frameworks in NEEDS II and the 7-point Agenda have been translated into short-to-medium-term programmes. Obasanjo's government launched Presidential Initiatives in 1999 for seven agricultural products (cassava, rice, vegetable oil, suar, livestock, cultivated trees and dry grains). The aim was to boost agricultural exports by taking advantage of preferential agreements in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Economic Partnership Agreements.

Institutional arrangements have been adopted for realizing sector objectives in view of the fact that agricultural and rural development are sine qua non for generating economic growth. These include: the relocation of the Department of Cooperatives of the Ministry of Labour and its merger with the Agricultural Cooperatives Division of the Ministry of Agriculture; the transfer of the Department of Rural Development from the Ministry of Water Resources to the Ministry of Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) and, the merging of its functions with the Rural Development Department; scrapping of the Federal Agricultural Coordinating Unit (FACU) and the agricultural Projects Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (APMEU) and the setting up of Projects Coordinating Unit (PCU) and streamlining of institutions for agricultural credit delivery with the emergence of the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) from the erstwhile Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) and the Peoples Bank. New institutions are also evolving to enable the Nigerian agricultural sector respond to the imperatives of the emerging global economic order (Anam, 2014).

Support for agricultural inputs has been a central element of Nigerian agricultural policy since the 1950s. This support consists primarily of public subsidies so that farmers can more easily acquire inputs (fertilizer, improved seeds). The pan-African action framework for agricultural development policy and strategy is provided by the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) adopted in 2002. This programme aims to attain average annual growth of agricultural productivity of at least 6 percent and sets a target for public investment in agriculture equal to at least 10 percent of national budgets. ECOWAS adopted a regional agricultural policy for West Africa in 2005. The plan called for drawing up National Agricultural Investment Programmes (NAIPs) in each country.

Although these programmes testified to the priority attention agricultural and rural development have received in Nigeria, experience demonstrates that rather than transform and modernize rural communities, the various programmes have, contrary to their objectives continued to impoverish and underdevelop rural communities. The programmes have failed to translate the dividends of Nigeria's economic reforms into measurable benefits for ordinary citizens. Nigeria has many singular features. The country is no exception when it comes to agricultural policy in the region, caught between enormous potential, immense ambitions and still insufficient concrete results. The policies were for a long time opportunistic and not coordinated among each other (Grandval & Douillet, 2011).

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III. Requirements for Agricultural and Rural Development in Nigeria

The major objective of agricultural and rural development in developing nations is the progressive improvement in rural levels of living achieved primarily through increases in small-farm incomes, output and productivity along with genuine food security, and enhanced standard of living. The basic essential conditions to this achievement are:

1. *National philosophical base.* The rural development strategy should have a philosophical ideological and holistic foundation. The practice of sitting in offices to propound slogans and manifestatos for people below was responsible for the failure of some rural development projects such as Farm Settlement Scheme, Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution etc. There should be internal motivating and compelling force or commitment for the rural sector and determination to work for their upliftment. Philosophical super structure makes rural development go beyond mere declaration of intentions.
2. *Integrated pilot demonstration.* Before 1976, there was no national rural development programme in Nigeria. Segmented or unco-ordinated rural development existed where it was assumed that new programmes in one community will have ripple effects on other communities and institutions. Oyaide (1988) commented that the first Department of Rural Development at Federal level was established in 1976 to mobilize people, initiate local projects with local leadership, promote agriculture, rural development and community projects. By 1978, the government was unsure of how to approach rural development. As such, the term "rural development" was added to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, and later replaced with Water Resources. All these occurred because rural development was not accorded an integral place in the overall development strategy.
3. *Cohesive identity.* People must not regard the social and cultural aspects of development as subordinate to the economic development. Innovation must guarantee the cohesiveness of the group and respect their history. The imposition of imported schemes should be discouraged because they are at variance with the cultural and sociological life of the people.
4. *Participatory development.* The involvement of the people in development activities taking place in their communities is likely to result in better decisions. Participation enables development programmes to be erected on the strength, traditional beliefs and values of communities (their social organizations, indigenous skills, aspiration, local leadership and energy potentials) thereby practically equipping villages with the capability to handle their own affairs on step by step basis. The top bottom approach to rural development employed by government functionaries does not whip up enthusiasm among the people. This approach evokes unwilling response as the people are regarded as being incapable of standing on their feet. Rural communities should be allowed to identify their problems and goals; and analyze their own needs. The core project leadership should come from within so as to sustain the development project.
5. *Strengthened local economies.* Rural development projects should not be treated as charity or welfare packages. People should be interested in the costing, evaluating and ensuring that targets are met. The danger here is that production is emphasized in rural development policy while marketing outlets are neglected. Defective local economies affect implementation of rural development programme.
6. *Improving small-scale agriculture.* Technology and innovation, new agricultural and innovations in farm practices are preconditions for sustained improvements in levels of output and productivity. Improved seeds, advanced techniques of irrigation and crop rotation, increased use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides and new development in veterinary medicine and animal nutrition represent major scientific advances in modern agriculture. These measures are technologically scale-neutral (Todaro & Smith, 2011).
7. *Adapting to new opportunities and new constraints.* As a route out of poverty and toward genuine rural development enhanced cereal productivity (the classic green revolution characteristic) represents only a small part of the agricultural opportunities. The growing urban population require higher value-added activities, particularly horticulture (fruits, vegetables and cut flowers) and acquaculture.

   The looming environmental problems driven by global warming and climate change is expected to most negatively affect sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In Nigeria, smaller and poorer farmers are likely to be affected severely especially those in the northern region because of their lower access to irrigation, other inputs and generally lesser capacity to adapt.
8. *Gender mainstreaming.* Women shoulder the primary responsibility for food security in Africa, yet development agencies have devoted minimal resources to researching the impact of their agricultural policies and new techniques on the wellbeing of Africa's women farmers. Now is the time to push for a paradigm shift: the urgent need for a gendered approach to agricultural and rural

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development policies in Nigeria. Women are an integral part of the African farming structure. The dominant agricultural policies developed for sub-Saharan Africa, with the disproportionate involvement and influence of external experts have ignored this gender dimension at a very real cost to its agriculture and gender equity. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in agricultural and rural development policies and programmes is essential. This is because the role that women play and their position in meeting the challenges of agricultural production and development are dominant and prominent. The socio-cultural and economic factors militating against women participation in agricultural production must be surmounted.

9. *Cooperative societies.* Nigerian cooperative societies – particularly farmers' cooperatives have not emerged as a national open movement effectively cutting across ethnic and other traditional ties. Rather they tend to be localized and parochial. The consumer cooperatives which tend to be more attractive to the elites are more open. Consumer societies are rarely found in rural areas thereby limiting the benefit of buying essential commodities at reduced rates to urban dwellers only.
10. *Optimizing local resources.* Nigeria's penchant for foreign made goods is detrimental to authentic development as local resources are neglected. Local talents and manpower as well as other resources should not be ignored so that the chance of evolving appropriate technology is not stifled. More resources should be invested in agricultural and rural development programmes as means for guaranteeing rural families secure livelihoods and overall wellbeing especially in this decade of falling oil prices in global market. Addressing these potentials tantamount to alleviating poverty and hunger vis-à-vis all of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly MDG 1.
11. *Policy coherence.* Agricultural and rural development policies should mainstream issues of programme continuity to other sectoral policies and implementation issues at various institutional levels. Policies should not be opportunistic and uncoordinated among each other. Successes, failures and lessons learned in preceding programmes should be analyzed. Strategies should be transposed into action in the field. There should be indicators to track and evaluate policy implementation. Cross-sector policy coherence is need that is capable of linking agricultural policy with rural development policy, support for small and medium sized enterprises and management of water and natural resources. At the institutional level, roles should be clearly divided between the various administrative offices responsible for agricultural and rural development. Moreover, both policies should not be elaborated from the top down with little participation by stakeholders.
12. *Micro credit schemes.* Micro credit scheme such as community micro finance operation has a key role to play in the rural economy through provision of financial capital in stocks of cash and credit to the rural poor. Existing micro-credit delivery models for the poor should be studied with a view to designing environmentally specific ones. The Grameen Bank, initiated by Professor Muhammed Yunus of Bangladesh is considered the 'model bank of the poor'. The Grameen innovative strength should be studied. In Thailand, village Banks exist as financial institution administered by representatives of the villages on behalf of the villages who are shareholders. African traditional responsive banking initiative system 'modernized' traditional institutions; the Esusu (revolving loan) and Ajo ojojumo (daily savings) should be promoted in rural areas. Umoh and Ibanga (1997) advocated the alternative micro-credit delivery model for Nigeria: The Ekpuk (family) model for alleviation of poverty in Nigeria. An inward looking initiative premised on Coleman (1958) conclusion that family nationalism exhibited in socio-politico-economic awareness can be meaningfully exploited for the attainment of the objectives of self reliance, self-sufficiency and self-help by residents of rural communities. Therefore, Nigerian government's effort at micro-credit delivery to the poor should be indigenous and environment specific.
13. *Strengthened policy and institutional capacities.* Good governance creates an environment conducive to efficient investment of human and material resources and strengthen formulation and implementation of policies and laws that facilitate economic growth and development. In agriculture and rural development, improvements are needed to adapt to market conditions and food security priorities. Policy, regulatory and institutional shifts are required to enable all levels of farming practice to have a stable engagement with natural resources and markets. Investment in human and social capital is required.
14. *Mitigating impact of HIV/AIDS.* Sub-Saharan Africa is at the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, where over 25 million people (70 percent of known global total) are living with HIV. Majority of victims are extremely poor rural dwellers. The effects on production and income are staggering. While production and income decline, families concurrently experience dramatic rises in h ealth and death-related expenditures. The effect on the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, on traditional social security mechanisms and

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demographic and socio economic characteristics of these societies are greater. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is creating a new poverty dynamic. It is also driven by poverty since people are induced into high risk situations and activities such as prostitution and migrant activities. Poor women are highly vulnerable. Thus the gravity of and scale of the HIV epidemic affect development interventions in all sectors – especially those in rural areas.

IV. Conditions for Sustainable People-Oriented Agricultural and Rural Developemnt in Nigeria

a) Land reform

In Nigeria, agricultural and rural development with a huge potential to benefit the poor can succeed through a joint effort by the government and farmers. Land reform is a deliberate attempt to recognize and transform agrarian systems with the intention of fostering a more equal distribution of agricultural incomes and facilitating rural development. The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) has repeatedly identified land reform as a necessary precondition for poverty-reducing agricultural and rural progress. An FAO report concluded that in many developing regions, land reform remains a prerequisite for development. Such reform is urgently needed because income inequalities and unemployment in rural areas have worsened. From an economic point of view, land redistribution not only increases rural employment and raises rural incomes but also leads to greater agricultural production and more efficient resource utilization. Todaro and Smith (2011) emphasized strongly that "if programmes of land reform can be legislated and effectively implemented by the government, the basis for improved output levels and higher standards of living for rural peasants will be established". An egalitarian land reform alone is not sufficient to fast track agricultural and rural development in sub-Saharan Africa especially Nigeria and allow further progress against poverty. Other conditions must also be met.

b) Appropriate policy and institutional environment

The possibility of reaping the benefits of agricultural development can only be realized when government support systems are created in form of policies to support the necessary incentives, economic opportunities expanded, access to needed credit and inputs to enable rural farmers expand their output and raise productivity. Land reform can only drive rural and agricultural development when there are corresponding changes in rural institutions that control production (such as fertilizer distribution, micro financial institutions), in supporting government aid services (such as rural transport and feeder roads, technical/educational extension services, storage and marketing facilities, public credit agencies) and government pricing policies with regard to inputs (such as removing factor price distortions) and outputs (ensuring market-value prices for farmers).

c) Achieving 4 goals of integrated development

Rural development is multi-transectoral encompassing (1) efforts to raise farm and non farm rural real incomes through (a) job creation (b) rural industrialization (c) increased provision of education (d) health care (e) nutrition (f) housing and (g) a variety of health related social and welfare services (2) a decreasing inequality in distribution of rural incomes and a lessening of urban-rural imbalances in income and economic opportunities (3) environmental sustainability – limiting extension of farm land into remaining forests and other fragile areas, promoting conservation and misuse of agro chemicals (4) the capacity of the rural economy to sustain and accelerate the pace of these improvements overtime.

Sub-Saharan Africa can only achieve true development if these four objectives are achieved. There must be a proper balance between urban and rural economic opportunities; conditions must be created for broad popular participation in national development efforts and rewards (Tadaro & Smith, 2011).

d) Increasing food supply and reducing hunger

Hunger remains a major peril for people with adverse consequences for health and productivity, so reinforcing poverty. The poorest and most hungry are one and the same people living on the margin of survival and highly vulnerable to any shock. There is need for an immediate impact on the livelihoods and food security of the rural poor through raising their own production. Preparedness for emergency-related food security is necessary as part of its agricultural renewal. Government should create targeted safety nets aimed at broadening access to food for persons who do not have the means of increasing their own food supplies.

Food security can be achieved through improvement of production. Nigerian government at all levels should draw upon the example set by the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) launched by FAO as a means of achieving household and national food security. It enables households and communities to attain higher levels of food security and better livelihoods, initially on a pilot scale but quickly followed by progressive scaling up. It represents an approach towards promoting vigorous large-scale community-based programmes.

e) Research and technology dissemination

In Nigeria agriculture requires a scientific and technological underpinning. The nation's agriculture is besieged with falling productivity, low spending on research and development, inefficiency of ongoing

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research in researching the farmer. Need for reform towards sustainable research and funding especially at community and regional levels also, integrating technology adoption and institutional strengthening. Research findings in educational institutions should be considered as essential inputs in agricultural and rural development policies.

V. Conclusion

Rural development is more than agricultural development, but critical to it development is enhancing an effective agricultural base. Agriculture's role in economic development is central because most of the people in poor countries make their living from the land. Concerned with welfare of the people necessarily means helping to raise, first, the farmers productivity in growing food and cash crops and second, the prices they receive for those crops.

In relating agricultural and rural development to overall national development in sub-Sahara Africa, especially Nigeria, it is important to understand that total agricultural output and productivity per capita can only substantially increase in a manner beneficial to the average small farmer and the landless rural dweller and sufficient food surplus available to promote food security and support the urban industrial sector if agricultural challenges are addressed. Importantly, in raising agricultural productivity sufficient to improve rural life, there must be concomitant off-farm employment creation along with improvements in educational, medical and other social services. In other words, with the land reform, supportive policies and achievement of the objectives of integrated development, Nigeria and sub-Sahara Africa is capable of tripling its agricultural output, thus accelerating effective rural development. According to Baha'I International Community (1996) effective and lasting solutions to problems related to feed insecurity will be found in policies and actions that pay adequate attention to those processes of development that aim primarily toward strengthening the human fabric of communities and revitalizing their institutions.

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