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Concept of Village Regrouping as an Alternative Strategy for Sustainable Micro Regional Development

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Abstract

This study examines how village regrouping can be used to provide and enhance sustainable development in the developing countries. The problems of this strategy have been clearly spelt out to guide those responsible for development at grassroots level. The method involved the use of secondary data. The paper concluded by advocating for the establishment for an area planning authority at local government level with members drawn from all groups that have interest in land matters so as to design, plan and execute village regrouping for sustainable micro-regional developments.

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Introduction

A common feature of the rural development efforts and programmes in developing countries is the absence of the essential aspects of planning. In effect the failures of the development efforts in developing countries are not far from the wrong choice of strategy and approach, planning process and implementation techniques. The net effect of the development efforts in developing countries as summarized by (Mabogunje, 1977) include: The intensification

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of regional in qualities everywhere with favoured regions growing at relatively faster rates than the less favoured, the gap between rural and urban standards of living widened considerably. Environmental conditions have sharply deteriorated under the impacts of either too rapid growth in the major cities or growing poverty in most other places and a vast majority of the population these countries become dispirited and dejected with their marginal relation to the development process. Such favourable socio-economic situations in developing countries require that efforts should be reviewed with the required urgency and vigour.

Rural sector concept explains how rural communities exhibit great differences within themselves and among one another. This characteristic is usually identified by comparison with the urban sector, in terms of the size of settlements and the dominant type of economic activity within such settlements. Population wise, it is usual to refer to settlements of less than 20,000 as rural settlements while those above 20,000 are urban economic provision of facilities and services. It rests on the assumption that rural amenities and other infrastructural facilities can best be provided at less cost per head the more concentrated the population of an area is.

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Rural development involves a set of projects and policies designed/co-ordinated and aimed at raising the whole pattern of living of a given rural population from a lower to a markedly higher level. Village regrouping is aimed at creating relatively larger settlements by bringing together several scattered villages for the purpose of a region, which is a planned region that is small and relatively homogeneous in terms of physical and socio-economic characteristics.

Aim and Objectives of the paper

The author is convinced that a new trend towards rural development is necessary and requires a trend which emphasizes integration in a spatial dimension, since one of the major aims of development planning is how to ensure that planning and development get to the people for whom they are intended. This paper is therefore, aimed at providing a general guide to the various strategies for micro-regional development, with an in depth review of the village regrouping concept and its relevance to the Nigerian situation. This paper centers on micro-regional approach to rural development because it believes that unless there is a micro-regional approach to development the benefits of economic growth and development are not likely to filter efficiently down to the majority of the particularly those in the rural areas.

Brief Review of the Strategies for Micro-regional Development

Since the basic aims of rural development are to stimulate the economic and social institutions in rural areas, to improve the general standard of living and to overcome the disadvantages of scattered population, any strategy for rural development should address itself to answer the following questions:

- (i) What spatial pattern of centers is most appropriate for rural policy requirements?
- (ii) Which particular centers should be chosen for investment and on what criteria?
- (iii) What kinds of investments are most appropriate for rural development?
- (iv) How can one ensure that the benefits of development will trickle down to the masses in the rural area?

These answers are fundamental in determining the suitability of various alternative strategies available for rural development. Some of the strategies for micro-regional development include the following:

1. Hierarchical Market/Service Centers Strategy

This strategy is based on the assumption that for any rural planning to be purposeful, some kind of historical system is necessary to ensure efficient supply of social services to distressed rural population. The creation of hierarchical market centers and the development of rural services in any micro-region is also based on the assumption that every rural producer needs to be within a convenient travel time of some adequately competitive selling places for his produce, some equally competitive sources of consumers and producers, goods and some adequately diversified service centers. These centers then acts as the basic building blocks of a much more regional or even national complex hierarchy of central places in a functional sense. Successful market and services centers are also believed to have potentials as rural growth centers and hence favourable considerations in the location of amenities. From the foregoing, this strategy can be useful for promoting agriculture and gainful exploitation of natural resources which

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