An Assessment of United Nations Development Project (Undp) in Rural Development in Nigeria


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ABSTRACT

It is a known fact that the various developmental projects embarked upon by the governments of many developing nations have not yielded the necessary results hence their reliance on several international organizations like the United Nations, World Bank, European Union to name but few for assistance. Nigeria as a developing nation have also benefited from many developmental projects of these international organizations and the thrust of this research therefore is to assess the efforts of the United Nations Development Project in combating poverty and aiding the development of the rural areas of Nigeria through the millennium development project. The study area Ikaram/Ibaram Akoko in Ondo State, south west Nigeria is one of the two rural settlements selected in Nigeria for the millennium development project with the aim of investing $110 per person per year on thirty thousand beneficiaries for five years. The research was carried out through the use of structured questionnaires, direct observation and personal interview with beneficiaries. The research shows that the project is working and has some benefits on the target population which include increased income as a result of improved farm yield which translates to improved standard of living. Also there is increase in primary school enrollment of pupils within the study area. Some recommendations were also made which include prompt and regular disbursement of funds, training and retraining of project staff, as well as improving the security within the study area especially for the project staff.

Keywords:
poverty alleviation, gender equality, women empowerment, rural development

Introduction

It has been identified in recent years that many Third World countries have realized that the development strategies they pursued in the
past three decades were inappropriate and in some cases irrelevant to their needs. They have also come to realize that a development strategy tied primarily to economic growth and gross domestic product will not by itself solve problems of employment and income distribution or improve the conditions of the poorest segments of the population (Francis, 1986). This was the situation in some developing countries like Brazil, Tanzania, and Nigeria among others. Recently, however, new emphasis has been accorded the rural sector in the development planning of the country and one of these is the involvement of some international organizations like the World Bank, United Nations among others in bi-national and multinational relations. The development of economic base of the rural areas by these organizations has been majorly by transfer of resources through loans and grants from the advanced countries and other international agencies to sponsor or supplement development programs in the third world and one of such programmes is the UN Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] which started in 1990 and expected to last for 15 years. The MDGs are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions— income, poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion—while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. It is envisaged that if the Goals are achieved, more than 500 million people will be lifted out of extreme poverty by 2050 and there will also be dramatic improvement in child health (Summit on the Millennium development Goals: 20-22 September, 2010) One of the strategies put in place to achieve these goals is the Millennium Development Village. 80 of such villages clustered into sites in 10 countries were selected worldwide to benefit from an all embracing program focusing on the attainment of the millennium development goals. (milleniumvillages.org, 2008) and in Nigeria, Ikaram/Ibaram is a beneficiary of these programmes. In Nigeria, the development of the rural area or empowerment of the rural dwellers has taken several strategies, programmes, policies among others in Nigeria. This is because of the recognitions accorded to the rural areas as channel through which even development can be achieved in the country. It is on record that local programmes such as the Green Revolution in agriculture, Operation Feed the Nation, Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFFRI) and others were in most cases supported by foreign policies and programmes for Nigeria without any significant improvement in the lives of the rural dwellers (Mabogunje & Akin L. 1981).
The Study Area

Ondo state is one of the privileged states in Nigeria to be selected for the millennium development project and Ikaramu/Ibaram - Akoko in Akoko North West L.G.A is even more privileged to be selected for the project. The Ikaram Millennium Village Project (MVP) is one of the two MVPs in Nigeria (the second one being in Pampaida, Kaduna State) and it officially took off in May 2006. The Ikaram MVP covers 7 villages in Akoko North West Local Government Area (ANWLGA) of Ondo State, South Western Region of Nigeria with an estimated population of about 18,000. The Ikaramu/Ibaram Millennium Village project is funded and supported by the Ondo state government, the Earth Institution of Columbia University in New York and UNDP. Thirty thousand beneficiaries are targeted on the premise of investing $110 per person over five year in order to transform the life of the rural poor. The population of the LGA, according to the 2006 population census, represented 6.62% of the total state's population of about 3.441 million people (2006 Census Population Figures).

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

History has it that several efforts, strategies, policies, programmes and projects have been channeled over time by many international organizations such as the (World Bank), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Development Association (IDA), the international Finance Corporation (IFC), European Monetary System (EMS), among others towards the development of the third world and according to Okafor (1986), he stated that in recent years, international agencies have played an increasing role in rural development in the third world countries.

Millenium Development Goals In Nigeria

Some of the millennium development goals that are currently being implemented across Nigeria include:

Goal 1: To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
Goal 2: To achieve universal primary education
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Data Analysis, Presentation And Finding

This section involves the presentation of findings being analyzed based on the facts and figures of the data collected concerning the research. Each of the goals was identified and relevant projects embarked upon by UNDP were observed and evaluated to corresponding beneficiaries in relations to the achievement in the cluster area.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ACHIEVEMENT.
Table 1: Eradication of Poverty and Hunger (Goal 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Description of project</th>
<th>Benefiting community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Construction of fertilizer store</td>
<td>20,000 tons of fertilizer supplied</td>
<td>Igedegede, Ikaram and Ibaram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Distribution of maize seed</td>
<td>30,000 tons of improved maize seeds</td>
<td>Igedegede, Ikaram and Ibaram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Distribution of cassava stem</td>
<td>5,000 improved cassava stems</td>
<td>Igedegede, Ikaram and Ibaram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Training of farmers</td>
<td>Operation of tractors, loan</td>
<td>Igedegede, Ikaram and Ibaram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author, field survey, 2013

To mention a few, some benefits derived by the people in the study area are:

i. Increased in crops yield,
ii. Increased in farm productivity
iii. More sizeable farm lands
iv. Increased income to farmers; and
v. Very improved and consolidated standard of living.

Table 2: Achieving Universal Primary Education (Goal 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Description of project</th>
<th>Benefiting community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Construction of primary school building</td>
<td>A block of 6- classroom each.</td>
<td>Igedegede, Ikaram and Ibaram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author, field survey, 2013

Though, the respondents complained of uneven distribution of these projects, but still commend the project initiator of good job, as relaying the benefits which these interventions had brought to the various communities. Some of which are:

- Increased enrolment rations of primary school pupils.
- Improved quality of Teaching and learning.
- Reduction of parents expenses of school materials like the free textbooks etc.

Table 3: Promotion of Gender Equality and women empowerment (Goal 3)
No | Project | Description of project | Benefiting community
--- | --- | --- | ---
1 | Campaign for enrolment of female child in primary school | Organization of seminars, public education and lectures on gender equality | Igedegede, Ikaram, Erusu and Ibaram

Source: Author, field survey, 2013

The promotion of Gender equality and women empowerment was also added as a focus in the cluster area, it was observed that family life, education, campaign for high enrolment of female child in both primary and secondary schools, and also the cry for gender equality are not left out.

RECOMMENDATION

Given the identified problems encountered by the people of Ikaramu/Ibaram who are directly impacted by the millennium development projects and the staff, it is recommended that there should be:

(1) **FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAND USE ACT**

In order to provide the necessary land for agricultural projects, it is commended that the provision of the land use Act of 1978 concerning agriculture should be fully implemented.

(2) **TRAINING AND RE-TRAINING OF STAFF**

It is also necessary to train and employ more personnel along the project lines. This could be done to arrest the shortage of manpower. It would also assist in determination of the achievement of the MDGs within the speculated of 2015.

Moreover, service provision would be enhanced over time.

(3) **REGULAR DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS**

The success of the entire projects depends on finance and regular disbursement of funds would bring this to bear. Since the impact is positive (see Fig. 4.9) and there is a high level of cooperation on the part of the affected community, adequate release of funds would go a long way in achieving the goals of the projects. To ensure this, more funding agents and donors are needed as well as project monitoring groups.

(4) **IMPROVED SECURITY**

It is also necessary that the hosting governments i.e. Federal, State and the Local governments apart from providing the peaceful political environment should ensure the safety of staff and properties. Hostility against the success of the projects is homed out of ignorance of the benefits of these projects and to reduce or eradicate it requires constant creation of awareness

(5) **PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES**

The provision of infrastructural services such as roads along the project areas would boost
accessibility and cut down transportation costs of users of the project.

**CONCLUSION**

The millennium village projects in Ikaramu/Ibaram are some of the pilot projects on the sponsorship of the United Nation. The major aim is to reduce extreme poverty in the developing countries and it success in Ikaramu/Ibaram makes for an expansion of the programme to involve 5,000 villages all over the world. Based on this research, it is noted that the achievement of the aim is feasible if only the present inputs could be improved upon in order to meet the deadline of 2015. Some of the most important aspects that need this improvement are development of manpower, disbursement of available funds and human relations to reduce hostility.

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http://www.un.org/milleniumgoals/images/mdgs_01.gif


