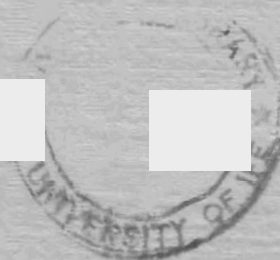


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Inaugural Lecture Series 15

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RURAL PROSPERITY:
A STRATEGY FOR
DEVELOPMENT IN
NIGERIA

by S. K. Taiwo Williams

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**RURAL POVERTY TO RURAL
PROSPERITY: A STRATEGY FOR
DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

by

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I Introduction

IT has become traditional for inaugural lecturers to give their subjects enigmatic titles. Those of you who have listened to previous lectures will testify to this. I do not intend to keep to this tradition of cryptic titles because I have no desire to keep you guessing. I have, therefore, chosen as my topic "rural poverty to rural prosperity: a strategy for development in Nigeria". As I proceed you will see spotlighted the magnitude of the problems that we face in our social and economic development.

The rural areas are increasingly being recognized as the key sector in many developing countries like Nigeria; and their rapid development and modernization have assumed priority objectives for many governments. I would, however, like to make it clear at the outset that the aims of rural development are *not* solely *nor* primarily economic. In trying to direct rural development, our concern must be first directed to the type of society and environment we are trying to create. In this, the economic aspects are, of course, important but they are important as a means and not as an end. In the difficult process of defining development goals, it is essential that this subsidiary status of the economic factor be remembered.

Another point that should be stressed is that the rural and urban sectors form part of what must be an integrated whole. They are essentially complementary. Sustained development of the urban communities in a situation like that of our country is dependent upon expanding agricultural and rural productivity. Satisfactory growth of our towns and cities cannot be expected to take place alongside poverty-stricken rural communities existing upon the hazardous and miserable returns to subsistence agriculture.

For a number of reasons, such as the growing attractiveness of life in urban areas, unfavourable terms of exchange for the products of our rural areas—resulting in a vicious cycle of abject poverty and low aspiration index—our rural areas are likely to continue to be at a disadvantage in our growing and dynamic economy unless special effort is made to create conditions for more balanced development.

Our intellectual community has the responsibility for taking the lead in organizing effective measures which will help to formulate a rural development strategy that will move our rural areas out of their vicious cycle of poverty into one of prosperity.

In developing the theme of this lecture, I shall attempt to define the concepts of "rural" and "rural development" and to explain why it is necessary to concentrate efforts on it. I shall then describe the major problems of rural development and the strategies that are being adopted to combat them. Next, I shall discuss the role of

the university in rural development with particular reference to our university and the rural development programme of its Department of Extension Education and Rural Sociology.

II The Concepts of "Rural" and "Rural Development"

The pertinent place to start is to describe what is meant by the terms rural and rural development. With regard to the concept of rural, there is no clear-cut definition of the term. Definitions that provide a working basis for mutual understanding depend somewhat on the point of view and the trend of emphasis of the author. Scholars have variously used size, social, psychological and economic criteria in defining what they mean by the concept. For the purpose of this lecture, we shall define the concept rural as applying to an area in which people depend mostly on primary industries for their living and in which most of the modern amenities are lacking.

There has been some argument as to whether this definition will suit the social scientists. It is not my intention to become involved in the various polemics regarding the necessary and sufficient determinants and the social characteristics of a rural community. It is my impression that we have not yet arrived at an operational definition of the concept rural which is generally applicable to our situation here in Nigeria.

With regard to the concept of rural development, however, many people see no difficulty in providing a definition. The economics point of view regards it in terms of raising output, increasing population, maximizing money incomes and all the things that flow from these. There is some validity in these views, but they constitute a gross simplification of reality and cannot be usefully applied in Nigeria without considerable circumspection and qualification.

Rural development is a complicated process that defies easy definition. Its complexity is attested to by the multiplicity of forms that its programmes have taken in the past and are still taking in many parts of the world. In some places, they imply "mass education", "mass action", "rural reconstruction", "communal action", "community development" and "rural animation". It is a set of economic and social development activities, peculiar to the process of transforming the traditional sector as a whole. These activities require a set of planning techniques different from those used for the modern sector. Basically, these activities fall within the agricultural sector. It is also a process whereby a series of changes takes place within a given rural population and locale leading to an improvement in the living conditions of the population.

Rural development is, therefore, a set of policies or goals with two main ends: to encourage and promote the well-being of the rural

majority; and to ensure the production of a surplus of a size and nature that will enable the fulfilment of a reasonable part of those natural development requirements that are not exclusively rural. It may be viewed in an integrated milieu, calling for a set of policies and projects, so designed and co-ordinated, that it will raise and sustain the standard of living of the rural population as a whole. It implies modernization which will bring about an increase in productive power and changes in human attitudes, replacing a sense of dependence on the natural environment with the desire and ability to influence the arrangement of that environment. It seeks to establish an economic base for the society which will generate progressively higher levels of output and living.

Rural development, in the light of the foregoing, is the outcome of a series of quantitative and qualitative changes, occurring among a given rural population, and whose converging effects indicate, in time, a rise in the standard of living and favourable changes in the way of life of the people concerned. It does not mean isolated programmes of community development, rural animation, mass education, agricultural extension or any of the other terms applied to sectoral programmes which are carried out in the rural area or within the rural community. It means, rather, a comprehensive development of the rural area.

The ambit of this concept, as defined, is therefore very wide indeed. It includes economic problems such as what, how and how much to produce; questions of taxation policy and incentives; of savings, credit and investment. It must also take into account systems of land tenure, education policy, local government, preservation of law and order, administration of justice, provision of roads and other means of communication, health and medical facilities, the quality of life, etc.

III Need for Concerted Efforts towards Rural Development

1. Rural areas exist in all countries and they need programmes of rural development. In many developing countries, like Nigeria, close to 80 per cent of the people live directly or indirectly on the resources of the land. It is therefore incumbent on the governments of these various countries to pay special attention to the development of their rural areas where the great majority of the population lives.

2. At present, the rural area forms the most important sector of our economy and therefore the general future development of the country is dependent on or conditioned by it. In fact, it constitutes the main source of that income which is required for the acquisition of equipment and raw materials necessary for the growth of national industries.

3. The lack of development activities that characterizes the rural areas at present has led to the sharp differences in social development

that exist between the urban and rural centres and has contributed to the exodus of young people from the rural areas to the urban centres where their presence has aggravated the problems of unemployment and overpopulation with all their social consequences.

4. The lack of development of secondary and tertiary infrastructures results in a concentration of manpower in the primary sector. It is therefore necessary to diversify the economy of the rural sector so as to shift this excess manpower now engaged in agricultural production towards other sectors. This shift from one sector to another will facilitate the geographical mobility of the population.

5. There is a strong humanitarian reason for giving highest priority to rural development. The more of the increase in G.N.P. that goes directly to the poorest families of a country, the greater the immediate effect of that increase on the overall welfare of the population. If income has a declining marginal utility, then utility is maximized by directing increases in income to the lowest strata of the population. The reality of this abstract proposition becomes quite vivid when one considers the far greater utility of an additional ₦100 to a family with a small cash annual income of ₦500 than to a family with an annual cash income of, say, ₦4,000.

6. Economic development is a process which requires the growth and modernization of both the rural and urban sectors. Indeed, the rural sector constitutes the social and economic environment of our total population, so that unless it can be set moving, many of the objectives of our development will be frustrated. But, it has to be accepted that the rural sector as a whole has lagged behind the rest of the economy. The low prices paid by urban buyers for farm produce has a marked effect on agricultural development which is the mainstay of our rural areas.

It must be remembered that a healthy agricultural sector will provide the main market for industrial production, whether urban or rurally based. The two sectors are therefore absolutely interdependent. It is now generally accepted that at the heart of development in our country lies the question of how the economy of the towns and the rural sector can grow in harmony.

IV Problems of Rural Development in Nigeria

Having discussed what is meant by rural development and the reasons for concerted effort to achieve it, I would like to direct your attention to the major problems of rural development in Nigeria and then to the strategies to be adopted in tackling some of the problems raised.

I would like to emphasize that it would be impossible for me in the course of this lecture to enumerate all the problems of rural

development. I shall consider only the salient ones in a manner that should provoke further discussion after this lecture.

(a) *Agriculture and agrarian reform*

In the economy of our country, the agricultural sector plays important and varied roles. Together with forestry, it employs about seventy per cent of the working population; accounts for sixty per cent of G.D.P. and a high percentage of our foreign exchange earnings. Another important role is its contribution to capital formation. Through the marketing boards, government imposes compulsory transfer of funds from agriculture for the development of the economy.

Despite these important roles of agriculture in our economic development, many problems have constrained the tempo of agricultural development in our country. It will be appropriate to highlight some of these. In the first place, our agricultural system is largely a peasant one. A large proportion of our export and food crops comes from peasant holdings that are so small and fragmented that they only give marginal returns to our farmers. This problem is further compounded by poor transportation and communication facilities; dependence on archaic and primitive farm tools and equipment; few storage facilities and lack of access to credit and capital.

With respect to land tenure and inheritance, many forms are found. Communal tenure and individual ownership appear to be the common feature, characterized by landlord/tenant arrangements. Communal tenure is characterized by rights in land being divided between the community and the individuals belonging to it. While it has certain advantages, communal tenure generally places difficulties in the way of improved farming and land use and militates against individual initiative. A farmer does not have the same degree of interest in the care and development of the land he uses as he would if it were his own property; he knows that should the fertility of the land decline, he can move to another location. The land cannot be used as security for development loans. In some parts of Nigeria, customs regarding the ownership of trees discourage farmers from planting profitable perennial crops. Land use planning, farm planning and introduction of better farming systems are rendered difficult by communal forms of tenure.

The landlord/tenant system and communal ownership of land, therefore, do not give the individual farmer any incentive to invest on improvements to the land. This is especially so in situations where the landlord claims from the tenant/farmer a large proportion of his produce as nominal rent.

Because of low *per capita* capital formation in our rural areas,

limited use is made of those technological inputs that can improve yields such as fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, and better- and higher-yielding varieties.

Another major problem is lack of organized marketing and storage systems which will help to increase production by stimulating consumption. It is well known that an efficient marketing system gives the farmers the necessary incentive to work harder, innovate and invest. An inefficient marketing system creates a situation in which the farmer receives low prices for his produce. Farming becomes unattractive to the young and educated school-leaver and there is an exodus from the rural areas. This has left agriculture in the hands of the older and non-literate members of the rural population with drastic consequences on productivity and the level of managerial ability.

Problems of finance, credit and loan facilities are other constraints to the development of agriculture in our rural areas. Problems of finance and credit arise in large part from a seasonal cycle of production which is superimposed on a largely non-seasonal pattern of local consumption. Production, because of climatic variations, normally comes at one or a few concentrated periods of harvest while consumption occurs relatively steadily throughout the year or at concentrated periods at times other than at harvest. Thus, provision for consumption and production inputs requires either a savings process from the past harvest or credit borrowed against a future harvest. Because our farmers lack tangible collaterals that are required by financial institutions in order to raise loans or get credit facilities, it appears they are condemned to the vicious circle of poverty. The recent establishment of an agricultural credit bank is a step in the right direction. If it is adequately funded and properly managed, it will remove one of the major constraints on our agricultural development.

Lack of effective agricultural extension policies, programmes and material that are relevant to the resources, needs and interests of farmers have also contributed to low agricultural productivity. It is inconceivable that farmers can be helped to improve production when there are so few extension agents to work with them and teach them improved techniques. At present, we have about one extension agent to about 20,000 farm families whereas the ideal is one agent to about 750 farm families.

I have dealt with the agricultural aspect so extensively for the obvious reason that it is an area in which I am interested and can speak with some authority.

(b) Health and nutrition

Our rural areas are characterized by inadequate health facilities, bad sanitary conditions and practices and the prevalence of communi-

cable diseases and child malnutrition. The improvement of the well-being of the people requires a concerted effort to eliminate these conditions through the provision of more and better health facilities, inoculation against communicable diseases, better systems of waste disposal, improvements to water supply and education on better feeding habits and health generally for our people.

In most of our rural areas, the majority of women of child-bearing age are either pregnant or nursing. The frequency of childbirth, added to the household, agricultural and trade activities which are expected of women, puts a severe strain on their health and results in reduced working capacity in addition to premature ageing. One way to solve this is through family planning which will enable women to space out their children. The new policy of asking newly qualified doctors to work for at least a year in rural areas before registration is a step in the right direction.

Rural diet in Nigeria is largely unbalanced despite the fact that people live in the midst of plenty. This has led to undernourishment and diseases of malnutrition, such as kwashiorkor, resulting from protein and vitamin deficiencies. Seasonal scarcity of food also influences the diet of our people. In some cases, part of the dietary weaknesses is due to tradition and beliefs. For example, in some areas guinea fowl eggs are forbidden to children because it is believed that they encourage pilfering and that unfertilized eggs produced in battery cages when eaten by women can be a cause of barrenness. There are several such taboos as many of you know.

(c) Rural manpower development and utilization

Low productivity is a serious check on our efforts to accelerate our rural development programmes. It also minimizes the motivation of our rural producers. Consequently, the strict vicious circle of subsistence economy, poverty, ignorance, lack of appropriate skills, low level of production, all of which have plagued our efforts in rural development, tends to be maintained.

In a country like ours where over seventy per cent of the population is to be found in rural agricultural communities and where public investment in formal education forms a substantial proportion of the national and state budgets, it should be a matter for concern that the educational system has so far failed to produce the beneficial results to be expected in a predominantly rural economy.

The question of the curriculum content of our education programmes is of considerable importance. Until recently, the educational system was designed to produce white collar workers for the administrative arms of the government and therefore classical education was emphasized. Such an emphasis is of little relevance to programmes of rural development as it tends to create citizens who are

unaware of the problems of the rural sector and who aspire to live in the urban industrial sector.

It is necessary in designing education for rural development to devise curricula which will counteract this attitude of preference for the developed sectors. The urban sector is not growing fast enough to absorb the output of the educational system while trained people are in urgent demand in the rural areas. The object of education for rural development should be to produce *job makers* rather than *job seekers*; *job creators* rather than *job fillers*.

Successful rural development must be accompanied by a radical rethinking of current attitudes to education and a revision of the schools' curricula to accord more suitably with rural development. Such revised curricula should provide, equally for rural as for urban children, a ladder to the highest educational levels for those capable of using it.

It is also agreed that an increase in the resources available for programmes of adult education would make some valuable contribution to rural development and that it may be a wise policy to expand educational efforts in those areas where rural development is already holding out hopes of a better life. It would, of course, be naive to think that a progressive situation can be created by educational reforms alone. Other reforms are likely to be needed if the new skills and attitudes stimulated by education are to be given scope.

There is therefore an urgent need for the planning and implementation of programmes relating to technical and vocational training. These programmes should be designed to meet specific needs. No training programme is adequate unless it is based on an assessment of the overall needs of the country. The lack of adequate manpower surveys make for a lack of precision in the projection of the types and numbers of graduates of the different institutions that will be needed. In the absence of good, reliable surveys, the design of educational curricula will have to rely on broad estimates of future manpower needs.

(d) *Administrative structures and practices*

The need for suitable administrative institutions for rural development programmes should be given careful consideration. The setting up of a separate Ministry of Rural Development has the advantage of the definite location of responsibility in a particular place. It has the disadvantage, however, that the responsibility of such a ministry would cut across those of other ministries resulting in untold confusion and difficulties. Some countries have set up Ministries of Rural Development but these have not fared very well precisely because of the problems identified above.

The other alternative that has been suggested is to involve the executive ministries like agriculture, health, education, works and transport directly in rural development programmes with some mechanism, such as a rural development committee with a good legitimizer as chairman, for co-ordinating their activities. In any administrative arrangement, harmonious relationships between the various ministries from the level of top executive to the operatives are necessary for effective execution of rural development programmes.

(e) *Leadership*

The success of any rural programme involves more than the development of material resources. The development of the skills of the people and the involvement of the community as a whole play a vital role. People need to be made aware of their problems and to be encouraged to find solutions through self-help methods. This will modify attitudes that resist change and facilitate the full expansion of individual capacities. What is needed to achieve this is the development of mature and able local leadership.

The role of leadership is to indicate the direction of change, to seek the active involvement of the rural population in developing programmes, to articulate the objectives sought by the society and to communicate the wishes of the local people to higher governmental officials. Efforts should therefore be made to identify these local leaders, convince them of the importance of rural development projects and seek ways of using their considerable talents so that they will not work at cross purposes.

Women, too, have a major part to play in the promotion of rural development. Their contribution at the village level as the focus of the family, as homemakers and cultivators is already considerable, and much can be done to raise the levels of rural living through them.

As long as the rural areas remain depressed and neglected in the tide of development, deprived of amenities, with unemployment and underemployment endemic and plagued with a low level of average income, there must continue to be a powerful tendency for our young people—even those with only a smattering of education—to seek their fortunes in the towns. Since the towns are not yet ready to absorb them in the large numbers now entering the labour market, unemployment is merely transferred from the rural areas to the urban slums which are now a feature of many of our towns.

The situation calls for a new strategy if we are to set into motion the wheel of national growth. Where the starting point should be is very difficult to point out, because of the myriad problems in our rural areas.

V Strategies for Rural Development

In common usage, strategy means a general plan for waging a campaign to attain particular objectives. It implies a sequence of co-ordinated decisions and actions. It combines the use of intelligence, guidance and, sometimes, force to win the battle. The concept of strategy, however, seems to have two rather distinct meanings in the literature of development. On the one hand, it is seen as a conscious overall plan for reaching predetermined goals of economic growth and social change. It is a matter of finding the appropriately consistent set of policy measures to arrive at these desired ends. On the other hand, development strategy is often seen by social historians as merely the path of social and economic change actually followed, and which resulted from essentially uncoordinated policies and pressures. It is an *ex post facto* rationalization of events.

Whether development strategy is conceived as a plan of how to get from where one is to where one wants to go or as a rationalization of how one got to where one is from where one was, the elements to be considered are about the same. The operating unit for which social and economic decisions are made must be defined. The distinction must be identified and the route has to be mapped. In this lecture, I shall consider strategy as a conscious plan for development and not merely as a prediction of the probable course for social and economic changes in rural areas.

Rural development strategies have to take account not only of where rural society is and where the planners wish it to go but also of who does what during the operation. In other words, a strategy should indicate the roles of different social groups and their responsibilities and rewards during the development process. Otherwise, it is hardly realistic to speak of a strategy; instead, one is only indulging in wishful thinking.

The goals of rural development strategy are not subject to precise definition. There seems to be general agreement, however, that a principal objective should be the continuous increase of agricultural production and productivity *per capita* which will result in improving living levels and incomes of the mass of the rural population. But rural development involves much more than agricultural production although the economic base of most rural areas depends on agriculture.

The second goal is generally presumed to be one of greater "social justice", of narrowing the gap between the incomes and opportunities of rural people on the one hand, and those of the employed and well-to-do urban population on the other. For our purpose, we can suggest that the broad goal of rural development in Nigeria is to

achieve increased rural productivity and thereby attain the income levels of today's industrialized countries.

Many developing countries, of which Nigeria is one, have therefore chosen to attack these problems of rural poverty, neglect and apathy largely through the strategies of (a) community development, (b) agricultural extension, and (c) lately, the system of an integrated approach. Let us examine these three strategies in greater detail.

(a) Community development

The community development process has been described by those who have a bias towards the development of agriculture as a strategy for bringing about economic development of the rural areas as a nebulous and useless concept. They argue that the community development concept is advocated by officials who wish to create an administrative empire for themselves. This view is rather unfortunate. The community development process, if properly understood, has a vital role to play in the economic development of our rural areas.

The term community development connotes the processes by which the efforts of the people themselves are linked with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of the communities, thus integrating them into the life of the nation and enabling them to contribute fully to national progress.

The process is therefore a complex one made up of two essential elements: (1) encouraging people to analyze their local problems with a view to improving their levels of living with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative, (2) provision of technical and other services in ways which encourage initiative, self-effort and co-operation. This point of view emphasizes that the people should not only participate in these efforts but also be encouraged to develop their initiative as much as possible. The effectiveness of community development programmes will, therefore, depend to a large extent on whether or not government encourages local planning and participation in the light of the technical possibilities brought to their attention. This is because if an atmosphere is created in which citizens feel it a duty and privilege to contribute their own quota actively to the development of their communities, much more is likely to be accomplished than is otherwise possible.

Community development, therefore, combines the appeal both to traditional and modernizing emotions. It relies on the old pattern of communal efforts in aid of the new desire for improvement and efficiency. But its reference to old traditions and reliance on enthusiasm, despite their present success, may well become weaknesses

in future. There is little doubt that in the long run, traditional communal effort will be more difficult to arouse; it will begin to die with the conditions of tribal life and subsistence agriculture which gave it birth. For example, the *efake* cultivation which was common among the Nupe people of Nigeria, the Hausa *gayya* and the *age* sets among some Yorubas are beginning to weaken; and as a cash economy and an element of competition between people spread more widely and deeply, this trend will surely continue.

Nevertheless, we still believe that there is certainly a future for community development in our country and particularly in the more remote and backward areas. To succeed, however, it must show real benefits. As these benefits grow in terms of cash income, the cash motive will gradually take over and at that point, it is expert extension services rather than enthusiasm that will be needed.

Integration and co-ordination are other essential features of success in the community development process. Community development is an educational process leading to changes in human behaviour. For it to succeed, reliance must be placed, among other things, on expertise from other agencies responsible for health, education, agriculture, transportation, rural electrification, co-operatives. This is generally not given because of lack of understanding of role expectations between staff of the executive ministries and the community development agency.

(b) *Agricultural extension*

On the other hand, many people feel that another strategy should be to put more effort into increasing agricultural productivity or output per person employed in agriculture. They therefore put their hopes on an efficient and effective agricultural extension programme. An agricultural extension programme is an educational process which deals directly with the improvement of agriculture. It involves developing skills, knowledge and favourable attitudes in the farmer and his family. It enables them to benefit from research and technology with the ultimate aim of raising their efficiency and thus achieving a higher level of living. Ministry of Agriculture technicians are brought in, to the extent available, to advise interested farmers. Demonstration plots and model farmers are frequently used to help teach others. Because of the fact that in many developing countries integration of the family and the farm is closely linked together, an integrated programme of agricultural and home economics extension work has also been evolved. It is therefore not unusual to find both the agricultural extension agent and the home economics agent working side by side.

Nevertheless, it is fruitless to expend any appreciable amount of money and resources on agricultural extension unless the knowledge about new inputs (improved seeds, fertilizers, insecticides and fungicides) and new techniques that are now urged upon the farmers are such as to provide meaningful, practicable and attractive answers to their problems and requirements.

Unfortunately, agricultural extension has not been as successful as many people would like to see it. Many of our farmers are still involved in primitive subsistence-type farming and most bright young people do not consider it to be a worthwhile career. This is why many protagonists of agricultural extension have begun to think of other ways in which the development of the rural areas can be accelerated and the vicious circle of poverty of these areas broken. One answer is thought to be the community development concept discussed earlier. The most important point to note is that there are, really, only few differences between the two techniques. They are both essentially educational processes geared to the rural population and their problems. Each is designed to improve the economic and social conditions of the rural areas based on the premise that changes in the *status quo* is desirable. Hence, many people like to refer to community development as the agency and agricultural extension as the method used to initiate the process of transformation of the social and economic life of the villages. It is my view that both techniques are essential for the development of rural areas. Agricultural extension can be regarded as being highly specialized and concentrating purely on agricultural production. However, agricultural extension is concerned indirectly, though not entirely, with other rural problems such as health, road construction and co-operatives. In these activities, it co-operates with other agencies directly responsible for promoting and facilitating these other services that are not exclusively agricultural. However, community development is here to stay and we have to live with the process whether some of us like it or not.

One point should be made clear. The community development process should not be construed as an inexpensive way of achieving rapid economic and social development. It may well turn out to be very costly indeed. What we need to address ourselves to is how to achieve co-operation between the two agencies wherever they occur. Some of the ways in which this co-operation can be achieved are:

- (i) Machinery for establishing and co-ordinating the programmes of community development with other executive ministries working in the rural areas should be explored. An inter-ministry committee of top-level officials should be set up

to encourage co-ordination of activities of ministries at all levels.

- (ii) Community development should be asked to confine its activities to the *motivation of people* in rural areas; to induce them to want to improve their way of life. It should help to identify and develop leadership among the people. Once an awareness of a need has been recognized, the executive ministries with the technical knowledge, should be asked to carry out the technical aspects of the projects. The training of community development staff does not equip them for these types of technical jobs.
- (iii) The training of all extension agents working in rural areas should be strengthened to cover the social and behavioural sciences. Such training should help them in the understanding of social organization, leadership, principles of planning and psychology. All these skills are important if one is to be effective in working with the rural population.
- (iv) All extension agents working in the rural areas should also be made aware of the importance of their role in calling for technical help from other ministries.

(c) *Integrated approach*

This is the latest approach that is gradually gaining ground in rural development in many developing countries. Nigeria has lately joined the bandwagon. This is the approach that we would like to see pursued more vigorously. It is based on the premise that the very nature of the process of rural development and the size of the problem of promoting economic and social progress in our rural areas require that action be taken on several fronts simultaneously and not independently of each other. Furthermore, it is felt that the very concept of rural development demands the application of the knowledge and skills of all relevant national or international services in an *integrated* rather than in an *isolated* or fragmentary way. This implies that programmes of agriculture, education and training, health and nutrition, rural electrification, co-operatives, water supply and road construction should *not* be planned and implemented each in isolation and without consideration of the implications that a development programme in one area of activity might have for the other.

This approach has as a primary objective the mobilizing of human and material resources to cope with the situation. It involves, also, the stimulation of active participation on the part of the population for whom the programme is designed as well as the development of institutions and systems that will support and sustain the approach. The latter will lay emphasis on land tenure, public services, co-

operatives and credit facilities and administrative facilities that will facilitate effective communication at all levels. For this approach to be successful, there is need for a co-ordinator with wide powers like our former Residents during the colonial era.

In pursuing the integrated approach to development, one of the crucial factors is the type of training given to persons at all levels involved in policy-making and execution and the public with whom they will work. Integration must take place at the inception of the idea to be implemented, in order that basic problems of planning, organization and implementation may be clarified before they solidify.

Finally, the concept of the integrated approach that is being advocated for adoption in this lecture means an *integral* approach in the sense that it is a highly structural and systematic exercise in which all components in the system of development must be understood to be important and must be appreciated for the part they play individually and collectively. In this sense, the concept differs from the "harmonization of plans and the co-operation" of various governmental agencies. It is also significant for the co-ordination of development plans.

VI **Role of the University of Ife in Rural Development and the Isoya Rural Development Project**

Many of the universities founded in developing countries on the initiative of the British since the Second World War were marked by the academic tradition from which they arose. It could indeed not be otherwise. The academics who founded them had been mostly bred in the British tradition and had known no other. Consequently, even though most of the people in these countries depended directly on agriculture for their subsistence, it is found, in general, that non-agricultural subjects occupied the pride of place until very recently. The same could be said of problems of rural areas. Many of the early universities did not relate their programmes to problems in their environment. This has led to the creation of a wide gulf between these institutions and the people they are expected to serve.

The argument that is being put forward here is that our economic progress at the present time must depend on the effective development of our rural areas. It is also our contention that this will require a very considerable change in our existing social structure. The role of our universities should involve a commitment to support these developments and changes by producing appropriately educated and trained men and women to serve in these areas and to develop intellectual leadership based on an understanding of the real life situations in the rural areas.

It is because of this concern for the development of our rural areas that the University of Ife, believing firmly in the philosophy of extending its resources beyond the boundaries of its classrooms and laboratories, decided, through its department of Extension Education and Rural Sociology, to become involved in the social and economic development of its rural environment. It is also believed that this involvement would be most effective at the initial stage if it is launched as a pilot project directed at the improvement of social and economic conditions in a selected number of villages whose total population is not so large as to be unmanageable.

Early in 1969 the members of the staff of the Department of Extension Education and Rural Sociology made preliminary visits to many villages in Ife Division in order to ascertain the willingness of the people to establish some form of relationship with the University of Ife and its Faculty of Agriculture. As a result of these meetings and discussions and with the active encouragement of the Vice-Chancellor, a comprehensive socio-agro-economic survey of the villages which had agreed to co-operate in the project was started in March 1970 and completed in July 1971. From this survey, the Isoya Rural Development Project was born with the following objectives:

- (a) to create a model for approaching rural development in some selected villages in Ife Division to be applied later on a wider ecological scale;
- (b) to serve as a laboratory for the training of potential rural development and agricultural extension agents;
- (c) to serve as a research centre for testing social science concepts related to community development and extension methodology.

The early stages of the project were financed by the University. The activities of the University were limited mainly to agricultural extension work which still continues to be a major one. In order to carry out this major activity, an experienced, intermediate-level agricultural extension agent was appointed by the University. He was assisted by an agricultural assistant on secondment to the project from the Western State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources as part of its contribution to the scheme. In 1971, the Dept. of Extension Education and Rural Sociology sought external financial assistance for the project and obtained this from the British Overseas Development Administration through the Inter-University Council. As part of this technical assistance, a co-operative relationship was established with the Dept. of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development of the University of Reading. In October 1972, two additional staff members (an anthropologist from the University of Reading and an audio visual aid specialist from Israel, under Israeli

technical assistance to Nigeria) arrived in Nigeria to join the Department in the project. A home economist, responsible for the improvement of rural homes and families, is to be appointed to join the team soon. In addition, a residential-cum-office building has been constructed in Isoya with financial assistance from the University and through communal labour contributed by the people of Isoya.

At the field level, there is a co-ordinator who has the function of co-ordinating the execution of planned programmes and relaying field problems to the planning committee. All research activities in the project by other departments are channelled through the co-ordinator. This is to enable the Department to have a firm control over activities going on in the villages involved in the project, especially as it is a pilot project. Due to the integrated nature of the project, a University advisory committee consisting of members from all relevant departments of the University is to be established for the project. This will include representatives from all the departments in the Faculty of Agriculture, the Departments of Economics and Geography in the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Institute of Population & Manpower Studies, the Department of Community Health and Child Care in the Faculty of Health Sciences, and a representative each from the University of Reading, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Reconstruction in the Western State. The advisory committee is to lay down general policies concerning the development of the project.

The project comprises nine villages and is located about 15 miles from the University campus on the newly constructed Ife/Ondo road. The total population of the area is about 1,800 and ninety per cent of the people are directly engaged in agricultural activities. The villages involved are Erefe, Aroko, Iyanfoworogi, Ladin, Keredolu, Walode, Olorombo, Esera and Isoya from which the project derived its name.

From our comprehensive, socio-agro-economic survey of the villages, the following characteristics of the villages emerged and are summarized as follows:

- (a) The population is wholly dependent on the land for its livelihood; cocoa is the most important crop. Most of the cocoa trees are old and unproductive.
- (b) Agricultural activities of the people depend entirely on human power. The main implements used are the traditional hoe and cutlass. The tools and techniques used in agricultural production determine the size of the farm unit, the yield obtained and the income of the people. The average size of farm is 2.5 acres; crop yields are very low with an average yield of about 200-300 lbs per acre recorded for maize when compared

with about 2000 lbs per acre obtained in the government extension work station in Ife.

- (c) In addition to this, the illiteracy rate among the adults is very high and the only formal educational institutions available are the five primary schools which are poorly ventilated, ill-equipped and indifferently staffed.
- (d) The land tenure and rights on land vary from simple squatter occupation to share cropping, group farming, leasehold and freehold. This variation in tenancy may be taken as an indication of the range of possible types of farming that are allowed. For example, with leasehold or share cropping, the farmer is not allowed to plant any major cash crop and if he does, a larger proportion of the harvest is taken by the landlord.
- (e) The infrastructure is very limited. There are very few all-season, motorable roads. Good drinking water is very scarce. No regular visits are made to the area by either a medical doctor or community nurse because of the poor condition of the area.

It is in the above environment that the Department of Extension Education and Rural Sociology accepted the challenge to initiate the pilot project.

A programme-planning committee, comprising only the Isoya Project team at this initial stage, has been set up to plan an action programme based on our findings from the socio-agro-economic survey. Most of our activities have been limited to agricultural extension activities, our efforts being directed to replacing the old cocoa trees with higher-yielding varieties. To date, we have raised and distributed over 25,000 Amazon cocoa seedlings accounting for about 50 acres of new plantings. In addition, a new, high-yielding maize variety was introduced into the village last planting season. In spite of initial resistance, about twenty-five farmers planted the Western yellow maize as an early crop last year. It was estimated that the farmers would plant about 30 acres of this new maize variety which would give more than 10 tons of harvested maize.

We arranged to help the farmers sell the maize to the University Farm which prepares its own feed for its livestock programme. We resorted to doing this for the farmers because we felt that marketing of their produce was a major constraint to agricultural development and this was one way of gaining the confidence of the farmers in the project. To our surprise, the farmers held on to their maize when our field staff came to collect the harvested maize for the University Farm.

This was because they found the maize was so good that they wanted to keep it for food. We ended up collecting less than 3 tons from thirteen farmers for which about ₦310 was obtained. One of

the thirteen farmers who sold all the maize he planted made more than ₦120. With this modest beginning, a favourable atmosphere has been created in the villages towards the production of the new maize variety. This year alone, more than 120 farmers have signed up to buy the new maize variety for the early planting season.

In an effort to increase cocoa production in the State, the government has launched a cocoa development scheme. The farmers in our project, which is located in the heart of the cocoa growing area of the State, are being assisted to participate fully in the scheme. About 100 farmers have so far registered for the scheme. Demonstration plots of maize and cocoa are to be set up in selected areas in the village to show the farmers the benefits of using improved planting materials and adopting improved techniques and methods.

Early this year, an adult literacy programme was launched with the co-operation of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Reconstruction at Ile-Ife. The latter trained the volunteer teachers from some of the village schools. There are about thirty farmers in each class, their ages ranging from thirty to sixty years. The classes meet thrice a week between 3 and 4 p.m. The adult learners include men and women in the villages. It is too early to predict the outcome of this programme but the initial enthusiasm with which it was received remains high. The Division of Community and Nursing Care in our Faculty of Health Sciences, through the assistance of the Head of the Division, is working out a health programme for us and the Institute of Population and Manpower Studies will also soon move to the area to mount a programme of fertility studies.

Our activities in the production of visual aids for the project have so far been limited to newsletters, posters, flip charts and a few photographs. The visual aid section has just completed an illustrated flip chart showing, for the benefit of farmers, the maize production process. All our visual aid materials which require written words are done in the Yoruba language. It is hoped that the present literacy programme will help to enhance the use of written materials among the farmers in the project.

In order to accelerate this action phase of project activity, a general directive was issued last year that all types of research activity being undertaken by staff members which may be of relevance to the project should be associated with it. In this way, a considerable amount of expertise is being channelled into the project to its advantage. This will also form an additional source of information to our action programme in the project.

VII Conclusion

Rural development calls for an administrative, economic and social infrastructure involving public expenditure, heavy capital

investment and skilled manpower. The rural communities cannot muster these resources alone. They must co-ordinate their programmes and resources with those of their urban counterparts, if possible, in a regional setting. They also require government and other assistance in reaching their development targets.

The improvement of the productive capacity of the rural population determines its living standards. Care should be taken to ensure the simultaneous improvement of all the social, cultural and political factors, including the strategic sectors of agriculture, industry, employment, education, health and housing.

Agriculture will long remain the main source of income of most of our rural areas. Modernized structures, farming implements and storage and marketing facilities should contribute to broadening and strengthening the household income of the rural population, which in the long run will diminish their dependence on government. It is not enough to concentrate on production alone. Stress should also be laid on the need to improve the quality of the commodities.

The investment required may exceed the resources—including self-help—available to local communities and even to governments. Because commercial banking and loan facilities are not as a rule available for rural development projects, it would be better to confine them to carefully selected, well developed and administered programmes with reasonably good pay off. In any case, the operating cost should be commensurate with the anticipated financial return.

To ensure optimum effectiveness and to attract investment, the development strategy should be geared to the setting up of sound rural institutions (co-operatives and others) designed to secure profits in the fields of production, marketing and credit.

Considerable advantage may be derived from a concerted approach in the case of investment in the basic utilities (for example, electricity, water supply, transport) whenever these services are based on the objectives of an integrated rural development policy.

Health services should aim at providing basic medical care for the entire population rather than specialized care for the few. This can be done by paying the same attention to the establishment of rural health centres as to the development of urban health services. Provision should be made for the training of different categories of doctors and other medical staff, with varying degrees of competence, to man a widespread service for preventive treatment and curative care. Health education should be part of the existing services. Family planning should be co-ordinated with maternal care, child care and food programmes.

Governments should continue in their efforts to adapt the educational systems to development requirements through the planning

and research services in the relevant ministries, with the assistance of the organizations and institutions concerned. Principles should be defined, agreed upon and applied with a view to preparing pupils and students in rural and urban areas to meet the demand of development in its various aspects. The aid of international institutions may be sought to support the national effort.

To ensure that human resources are fully developed, education and vocational training should go beyond the traditional concept of schooling and should prepare co-ordinated programmes for various community groups such as young school leavers and adult workers and community leaders. Special consideration should also be given to the vocational training of women.

In this connection, it is necessary to recognize the importance of education and vocational training in integrated development projects, possibly based on district development centres and placed under the responsibility of regional or district development committees. These centres would be responsible for all the development work in each region or district and would comprise special sections for peasants, co-operatives, community development, local leadership, health and commercial training. An especially important function of such centres would be to organize a variety of activities geared to promoting the employment of youth, such as local apprenticeship programmes, plans for the vocational training of children who have left school prematurely and young farmers' clubs.

The assistance of universities and other institutions is needed in identifying income-generating schemes that afford job opportunities at different educational levels. They should be involved in rural development projects now more than ever before.

Rural housing will need special attention, and it may be necessary to undertake more systematic research into the construction of low-cost housing specifically suited to Nigerian conditions.

The planning of integrated rural development is essentially a government responsibility. Not only funds from the national budget but also the greater part of the income from rural areas should be earmarked for specific projects in the rural areas (e.g. roads and processing industries).

Rural communities should also contribute to their own development. They can do so through self-help activities where they contribute labour to communal projects as well as through voluntary financial contributions and local taxes.

Land is one of the main sources of wealth for the rural population. Yet traditional land tenure systems have hitherto prevented the rural population from making satisfactory use of the land, and hence impeded rural development. Measures should be taken to ensure

more security of tenure and stability in farming for the individual or the family.

Individual rural projects may require some modest external contribution but, in the case of a country's aggregate rural projects, that contribution may involve large external resources. It is recommended that well co-ordinated national projects for integrated rural development be given adequate financial and technical assistance by our various state governments and the federal government. In this connection, the Western Nigeria pilot project for the promotion of rural development, which is supported by I.L.O. and other United Nations specialized agencies and designed to test the validity of the integrated approach and the University of Ife Isoya Rural Development Project could be taken as model inter-disciplinary projects which can be applied in other areas.

Responsibility regarding the control and management of public funds for financing the sectoral components of an integrated rural development programme is considered a delicate and sensitive issue. Of the two alternative methods which readily suggest themselves in making such provision, the first, consistent with the spirit of integration, is to lump together the funds intended for such a policy and to entrust one ministry with budgetary administration. The other method is to make sectoral provision and allow each ministry responsible for the implementation of part of the programme to control the administration of the funds assigned to it.

While it is not possible to make a firm, blanket recommendation regarding choice of either method, it is strongly recommended that so vital a decision should not be rashly made. The problem should, in each case, be carefully analyzed, bearing in mind the fact that the method selected should be the one best suited to the accelerated implementation of integrated rural development.

I wish to end this lecture by attempting to sell to you the idea that poverty by itself is no disgrace; but to the extent that it places a ceiling on growth and development, it is patently irritating and annoying. In contemporary Nigeria, it is not only annoying, it is also indefensible. Our struggle to turn our rural areas from poverty to prosperity is not a struggle simply to support people or to make them dependent on the generosity of others; it is a struggle to give our forgotten rural people a chance that allows them to develop and use their skills and talents in the promise of an egalitarian society which this nation offers. We, in the Dept. of Extension Education and Rural Sociology, feel that it is right and proper that we should help in this struggle and with the help and co-operation of this University, we will succeed.