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## Rural – Urban Migration And Population Problems In Central Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*The movement of man from one place to another has a long history, the rate and volume of this movement was remarkable since the late 15th century when improved socio-economic development and technological innovations facilitated the process. This process has several distinctive characteristics. Economically, the structure of production changes and an increasing number of workers who are involved in non-agricultural activities may have unequal access to economic opportunities usually forced people to move from one place to another; with certain social implications such as pollution, congestion, shortage of accommodation, prostitutions and inadequate and poorly managed infrastructure. The study therefore is aimed at studying the reasons for this rural to urban migration with its attendant problems.*

Movement of people from one place to another either as individuals or groups is not a new development in Nigeria. This type of movement has come to be known as migration. Migration is the actual movement of people from one place, region or country to another. (Sils, 1968). Man has always moved from land of scarcity to land of plenty where he intends to get enough treat as well as feeding his cattle and sheep. As a farmer, he has moved from a less fertile to a more fertile one. (Amin, 1974). He has moved from a place of hostility and deprivation to a place of freedom. The basic interest between pre-colonial and contemporary migrations is that in the former migrations were relatively low. Civil, epidemic and religions wars forced people to move from one place to another.

In contemporary Africa and Nigeria in particular, the basic reason why people move has been the revolution of values brought about by European presence. Such values include improvements in transportation and communication, establishment of schools, industries and hospitals. New nodal points were created along railway lines and roads. This resulted in an increase in migration into new cities such as Jos,

Makurdi, Enugu e.t.c. The creation of the new nodal points accompanied by infrastructure, investments and administrative roles served as the beginning of rural to urban migration by initiating the urban pull on rural dwellers.

The objective of this paper is to examine rural to urban migration with its attendant problems in the rural areas in general. Rural to urban migration causes rapid growth of urban populations that damages the environment in several ways and causes other socio-economic problems like acute shortage of basic facilities, such as portable water, housing, environmental sanitation, unemployment and underemployment. The paper is discussed under five subsections. After the introduction comes the different theories of migration. The third part focuses on the various types of migration, causes of migration and lastly, the effect of such migrations on the central Nigerian area and the conclusion.

### **Theories of Migration**

Migration generally and rural-urban migration in particular has social problems which are of great interest to both the humanists and social scientists and because of this, opinions differ as to what can lead to migration. For the purpose of this study, we shall examine three basic theories of migration with the intention of drawing a parallel line from them.

The economic theory believes that an environment that could guarantee good means of livelihood to people in terms of food and trade is bound to attract migrants and vice-versa. The propagators of this line of thought submitted that any economically viable environment would favour trade, and this in turn would attract people from all works of life. (Wesley, 1963). Such migrants according to them, would come with the hope of getting a better condition of living and chances are that they may stay put at the place once the prospects are good. Another example usually used to substantiate their proposition is the mass movement of people from Africa to Europe and oil rich countries of Asia. This theory is being proclaimed by some migrant themselves as the desire to obtain money for such purposes as the payment of taxes, the purchase of certain highly valued consumer goods etc. (Samuel, 1940).

The second theory of migration is the political theory. This theory argues that politics, not only economy, forms the basis for migration. The scholars of this theory submitted that no matter the amount of mineral resources deposited under the soil of any country, if such a country is ruled by tyrannical and visionless government, the likely consequence of this is a case of suffering amidst plenty. (Odetola, 1963). This in turn it is believed, would encourage and lead to migration.

The inability for its leaders to manage the political affairs of the country successfully resulted into mass migration of her egg-heads as well as medical personnel to other parts of the world in search of greener pastures. (Wesley, 1963)

The third theory is the social theory which attempts to explain the causes of migration. The social thought submitted that given that there is a good government as well as sound economy; people could still migrate if the opinion that man is a social animal whose fulfillment in life is not complete without a network of good social relationship holds true. This relationship of man with his fellow men on one hand and with his environment on the other hand stimulates migration. Oguntoyinbo, subscribes to this view. He states that while economic reason can stimulate migration, social values should be considered as predominance factors that propel migration in most localities. (Oguntoyinbo, 1999)

These social conditions include the desire to escape from an inferior social status imposed by the community because of social status of one's parents, the desire to escape from domination and restrictions imposed by local custom, migration to attend higher educational institutions, the desire to escape punishment from local enemies and witchcraft or the desire to move to an area with varied recreational and other social amenities like electricity and pipe water. (Olomo, 1999).

### **Types of Migration**

Migration can be divided into two major types. i.e international and internal migration.

#### **International Migration**

This migration involves the movement of people from one territory of a country to another. It involves crossing of international boundaries. It entails and requires some documentation before entry is allowed. There are economic and cultural environment of the migrant. Integration and adjustment are slower than in the case of internal migration. International migration seems to be more and more influenced by political factors and less a matter of individual choice. This migration also involves force like the one that took place in a large scale between 1619 and 1776 when millions of Africans were taken to America and West Indies as slaves.

#### **Internal Migration**

This type of migration takes place within a particular country and therefore involves shorter and adjustment is easier for the migrant compared to international migration. The rural to urban migration began in earnest after independence in 1960. About 60% of urban population growth was due to natural increase while 40% resulted

from rural to urban migration. Between the 1960s and 1970s, rural to urban migration accounted for about 55% of urban growth. (Nwanna, 2004).

Rural-Urban migration is the movement of people from remote areas or village settlement to a city. This migration has attracted much attention in recent years largely because of the increasing number of people involved, but basically because of the rapid growth of tropical African cities. Most migrants from rural areas to the towns consist of young educated people. According to Adepoju, the attraction of urban areas is largely but not entirely economic and that rural urban income and quality of life differentials remain generally large. The availability of superior health care, educational opportunities and housing are additional attractions to urban centres. In recent times, inter-ethnic wars have forced rural dwellers to urban areas e.g the Tiv-Kwalla ethnic conflict in Quaran Pan Local Government Area of Plateau State, (Azgaku, 2006). The Bassa/Egbura ethnic conflict in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, the Yelwa/Shendam crisis and a host of others.

The rural-rural migration is another important type of internal migration especially within the African continent. Study has shown that the vast majorities of people who move from one rural area to another are mostly illiterate and originate from area where farmlands are inadequate. (Olomo, 1999).

Another aspect of internal migration is the urban-urban migration which involves movement from small or medium – size towns to larger cities which offer more opportunities in terms of higher education and various jobs. This is common with the advanced countries of the west.

Other patterns of internal migration generally include seasonal migration characterized by nomadic gatherers who live by hunting, fishing or collecting, and frequently engage in seasonal immigration. It is a form of labor migration which involves the movement of single males to the mines, commercial farms and cities for wage employment where their services are needed and periodically remain away from their permanent homes for some few months or a year before networking back.

### **Causes of Migration**

Causes of migration among the people of central Nigeria just like any other society involve both the “pull” and “push” factors. In economic terms, the pull factors of migration refers predominantly to those available necessities in a particular area that attract the rural dwellers or people from other towns. Such necessities include availabilities of cheap an affordable health services, employment opportunities, recreational facilities, good access to educational facilities, discovery of mining activities and decent accommodation. Push factors on the other hand connote those

conditions that make one to move out of his original place of settlement. These include superiority and inferiority complex, scarcity of farmland for cultivation, the need to escape punishment for crime committed and also running away from enemies and witchcraft.

In Jos Plateau, Tin Mining and smelting showed that the industry was a great factor in attracting people to Jos. Tin Mining and smelting attracted the indigenous and non-indigenous people of Jos Plateau to places like Hilimi and Bichi. (Fwatshak, 1998). By 1912, 85 European companies were operating mines at different places on the Jos Plateau like Jos, Bukuru, Kuru Dilimi, warrang, Barakin Ladi etc. Extension fields were opened at Mangu, Bokkos, Manguna and Dabbo. These developments made the tin industry the largest employer of labour not only in colonial Plateau, but central Nigeria as a whole. Thus the mining companies seasonally or permanently employed thousands of labourers.

Taxation is another factor that stimulates migration. Taxes were imposed to enforce the recognition of British power and to stimulate Africans to work. (Fwashak, 1998). It pushed peasants to the mines to work so as to meet up with their tax obligation.

After the Second World War, the colonial government modernized their colonies and reclassified some territories from rural to urban. The country and central Nigeria in particular became reorganized into regions with provinces, divisions and districts as centres of political, economic, administrative and social activities. The pace of urbanization was enhanced followed by an imbalance between the rural and urban areas. This gave a boost to the urban pull.

The rural to urban migration began in earnest after independence in 1960. The incessant political instability in the country since independence has played a major role in the ever changing pattern of the distribution of urban areas and also contributed to the differential population growth of colonial urban centres such as Jos, Makurdi and Illorin. The post war oil boom and the massive injection of money to reconstruct urban utilities and infrastructure devastated the agricultural sector as more people migrated into the urban centres. Since then; migration has become the main source of population increase in the cities, especially the city of Jos, Abuja, Makurdi and Illorin. Most of these states and the Federal Capital has become University Towns with manufacturing industries which serve as a pull to attract more population to these cities. It could therefore, be said that the high rates of rural to urban migration are in part a consequence of official neglect of rural economic conditions despite rhetorical commitments to rural development.

The revolution in transportation characterized by railway construction, road building, creek and labour improvement, all contribute to rural-urban migration.

The persistence of migration or migrants in post colonial Nigeria and the middle belt in particular is due basically to the crisis of underdevelopment, social and political failures and crises, (Fwashak, 1998). Bako has, for example, identified the causes of large scale migrations in the 1980s and 1990s to include the following, the sudden collapse of agriculture, massive proletarianization of peasants by state Agro-Allied and international capital, perennial droughts and famine, civil and the expansion of manufacturing, mining and capitalist activities in some states. To these we may add economic recession. In Nigeria central Nigeria in Particular agriculture started to decline in the 1960s and collapsed in the 1970s due to some reasons, which included the oil boom. Since the oil boom in the 1970s petroleum became Nigeria's leading foreign exchange earner, contributing 58.1% to the GNP (1970). The oil boom led to expansion in construction, education, health centers and general social welfare, commerce, banking and manufacturing in urban area. Workers incomes and fringe benefits were improved leading to the development in consumerist testes for imports. Further rural-urban drift increased.

### **Effect of such Migration on Central Nigeria**

Rapid urban population growth due to rural-urban migration and natural increase cause socio-economic problems that clearly manifested in the region and cultural landscapes of contemporary Nigeria. These problems are those of potable water, housing, environmental sanitation, unemployment and underdevelopment. Urban dwellers use more water and energy and generate more wastes than rural dwellers. Water is an essential need of man yet its supply in terms of quantity and quality is inadequate. The major indicator is the number of people who have access to safe water. Access to safe water in central Nigeria urban areas particularly Lafia and Makurdi has always been poor. Investments in water supply systems do not keep pace with the burgeoning urban populations. These problems were exacerbated by the incessant power supply that either disrupted the process or raised the costs of providing safe water. Furthermore, many of the small water mains and pipes are old and require replacement or rehabilitation in order to accommodate the rise in demand.

Housing is inadequate both in quantity and in quality owing to burgeoning urban populations. Estimates from Federal Office of statistics show that a great proposition of households' live in one-room apartments. The Federal Government promised Nigerians "Houses for all by the year 2002". The problem of housing remained intractable with increasing growth of slums, shanties and squatter settlements. These settlements have both physiological and psychosocial implications for people that are imprisoned in them. Evidence has shown that housing conditions in Nigeria are

not improving, rather they are deteriorating. Most houses lack access to modern amenities such as electricity, overcrowded, thereby resulting to air borne diseases such as tuberculosis and meningitis.

The urban environmental problems include liquid and solid waste management and water pollution; among others. The amount of social waste generated by cities and industries in developing countries including Nigeria was projected to double between 1985 and 2025 as a result of population growth, (Nwanna, 2004). Poor management of solid wastes cause health problems and flooding of the streets whenever it rains, especially in the metropolis. The reluctance of the urban dwellers to pay for waste disposal services also contributes to the inefficiency of the waste management authorities.

Another effect of rural – urban migration is the problem of unemployment. Urban migrants are mostly adults who are in the most fertile periods of their life. Evidence shows that graduate unemployment existed but declined during the oil boom of the 1970s, it increased again during the second republic and ever since then has been on the increase. Many of these young graduates never went back to farming; rather they migrated to the cities looking for jobs that do not exist.

Another related problem is social ills especially among the youth who are in their prime. Social ills in this context include house breaking, prostitution, gambling, and insincerity, they, perjuring etc. The high rate of immorality among the urban youths especially in the area of prostitution facilitates the quick spread of sexual transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS.

### **Ways of Reducing Rural-Urban Migration**

The central parts of Nigeria just like other parts of the country are faced with the economic and political repercussion of rural-urban migration. In the past, governments had embarked on series of projects such as the Green Revolution, River-Basin Development Programmes, operation Feed the Nation and Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) etc. These laudable programmes however failed because of lack of genuine political support, even when there was commitment, the frequent changes in government also adversely affected the attainment of the objective. The lack of continuity in programme implementation is another problem. Another reason for the failure in government policies is the dearth of information about the trends, causes and consequences of migration. To effectively and efficiently grapple with the problems of rural-urban migration, the following recommendations are necessary.

Research should be carried out to identify and strengthen the understanding of the factors, trends, characteristics and consequences of rural-urban migration. Acquisition of vital information will provide grounds for the formulation of an effective population distribution plan.

Efforts should be geared towards sustainable rural development. Investors should be encouraged to partner with the government to build factories and industries in the rural areas. For rural development programmes to succeed, they must be focused on the rural population particularly the women and the aged.

Finally, the government should work towards developing “healthy cities”. A healthy city is an urban area which is establishing and continually improving its physical and social environments and which uses the community’s resources to enable its citizens to develop and solve their own health problems.

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