

## **Plantain Theory of Sustainable Development: The Accelerated Increase Paradigm for Nigeria**

**E. O. FRANK, PhD**

Dept of Pol. Science /Pub Admin  
University of Uyo  
Akwa Ibom State  
Nigeria

### **Abstract**

*Sustainable Development is herein equated to the Plantain plant, which survives several adverse conditions. It was conducted through the descriptive approach where secondary data were obtained from the available published materials for analysis. The study canvassed that all projects selected for development in Nigeria to be sustainable should those, which have the quality of the plantain plant. It further proposed for the robust involvement of the robust involvement of the state in a mixed economy system, science education should emphasize, industrialization and development plan should be the dynamics for accelerated sustainable development in Nigeria. The study further prescribed that projects selected for inclusion in the accelerated sustainable development plan, should be selected based on project selection criteria, which would enable them reach the breakeven point and sustain itself. Development plan in which the people would not own up and become participants would not be sustainable. Sustainable Development Plan must assume the form of the 'Marshall Plan' to drive accelerated sustainable development in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Plantain, Sustainable, Accelerated, Paradigm, Development

### **1. Introduction**

The lack of development of the rural areas and economy in Nigeria since independence is legendary. The underdevelopment of the urban, semi-urban and the economy is yet another legacy of the various Nigeria governments till this date. The combination of the poor initiatives towards rural, urban and general economic development has placed Nigeria in backward position in all the UN all the UN development scale ever since the global organization started taking stock of global development and growth.

Since 1990 when the UN Human Development Report (HDR), was launched, a project headed by Mahbub Ul Haq and Amartya Sen as consultants, Nigeria has often found itself in the bottom rung of the scale. The global report uses indices such as Human Development Index (HDI), Gender-related Development index, Gender Empowerment Measure, Human Poverty index, Gender Empowerment Measure and Human Poverty Index. The top 10 Movers highlighted in the 2010 Report out of 135 countries that improved most in HDI, did not include Nigeria. The Global Report which started in the 1990 with the 'Concept and Measurement of Human Development' to 2015 edition 'Work for Human Development' had other 23 reports between them. In all the reports Nigeria had fared poorly, none had Nigeria even in the 50<sup>th</sup> position. Nigeria had often belonged to the last twenty countries from below, which indicated that in all the considered indices, Nigeria had performed poorly all through the reports, making the need to review Nigeria's development paradigm a categorical imperative. In all the above measurements, Nigeria had always trailed behind. The paradox of this backward position against the available human and natural material resources indicated a missing link in the Nigeria development mix.

Against this backdrop several policies and strategies had been adopted and applied such policies as Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), which was intended to manufacture those products which were being imported and consumed.

State driven development approach led to the creation of State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and several Agencies of government. This gave way to Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), rolled into the prescriptions of the 'Washington Consensus' based on the liberal economic framework. Nigeria now is in the development era, in which the private sector is expected to be the engine of growth and development. This was moved a step forward with full privatization and commercialization of erstwhile State Owned Enterprises. Nigeria and African States also adopted 'the African Peer Review Mechanism' but due to its voluntary nature, its utility value is limited. The continued failures of these policy strategies in the developing countries prompted the United Nations to seek economic and political aspects of assisting underdevelopment states to make progress in the development front.

The failure of these policy strategies engendered the UN to initiate several strategies among which are the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** with its eight international development goals (2000-2015). Nigeria at the end of the MDGs period had very insignificant achievement level. At the end of the MDGs duration, the UN initiated the 'transforming our World: the 2013 Agenda for Sustainable Development (a set of seventeen (17) global goals with 169 targets (A/RES/70/1)). It is the observation of this study, that since Nigeria did not take stock of why it performed so abysmally in the MDGs, era, it would repeat the same mistake in the SDGs period. Buoyed by the above state of affairs in Nigeria, a development expert developed the 'Plantain Theory of Sustainable Development' given the exhaustible nature of resources required for development.

### **The Plantain Theory of Sustainable Development**

Plantain is a common food plant dominant in Africa, Latin America and many parts of the world and serve as a staple food crop for some countries, some of which are; Uganda, Rwanda, Ghana, Cameroon and Nigeria. Its scientific name is '*musa paradisiaca*'. Musa being the genus name and '*Paradisiaca*' being the specie name. They are large perennial, herbaceous plants that consist of underground stem the 'corm', 'bulb', or rhizome with 200-500 fibrous roots from which it propagate by sprout or suckers. This is an illustration of sustainability. Thus, any policy pursued by the state, and investment meant for Sustainable Development, should have the capacity for reproduction like the sucker of '*musa paradisiaca*', for sustainable human development.

It is lower in sugar and rich in protein contents (it is recommended as staple food for diabetic patients). Its process of fruit production is known as parthenocarpy that is, without cross-pollination. Genetically Plantains are triploid with 3 sets of chromosomes which aid its propagation by suckers. It has the ability to regenerate from the corms and quickly recover when damaged by fire, flood and even wind (sustainability). Each corm (bulb, rhizome, and tuber) of the plantain is able to propagate between three and nine suckers. This is an illustration of sustainability. Thus, any policy pursued by the state, and investment meant for Sustainable Development, should be able to act like the sucker of '*musa paradisiaca*' that is, augment itself, for sustainable human development (Frank, 2015). The theory was meant to attempt to balance the development equation where there is a growing population which is faced with degrading environment, decreasing food index and finite natural resources.

### **2. Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study was about the fact that Nigeria has adopted Sustainable Development as a slogan of public policy for development, yet the principles of accelerated increase of sustainable development have not been initiated. This becomes problematic because a state of sustainable development entails not only accelerated production; it also entails a state of high mass consumption. The leading sectors shift towards the production of durable consumer's goods and services in this stage. At this stage, incomes have climbed to levels where clothing, basic food and shelter are no longer the main consumption concerns of workers. At this stage, many resources are allocated to social welfare and security; the political process (Offiong, 1980: 42) creates this situation. This is where the economy is stabilized and is able to produce most of these items within its economy. The stage of high mass consumption is a function of assuming specific role in the economy by the state.

The principal issues are that the processes of accelerating increase production of goods and services to take the State to the stage of high mass consumption entails several interrelated set of actions, which include a robust leadership role for the State in the economy, initiation of policies and programmes with the nature of 'musa paradisiaca', creation of strong institutions (based on merit as against ascription) as the basis of recruitment, funding education and pursuit of development through annual plan.

The problem of growing population, decreasing food index, degrading of the environment and providing for the future of generation yet unborn can only be addressed by the state and at the same time accelerate increase development in the State.

### **3. Method of Study**

The main problem of this study related to the inability of the development planners in Nigeria to take advantage of the prescriptions of the plantain theory of sustainable development and move the state to a stage of high mass consumption without depleting resources excessively. Towards this end, the descriptive approach was employed in the study, whereby the three main components of the technique, observation, case study and survey were deployed to obtain the analyzed data. In this regard, the observation reviewed using secondary resources the past and current approach to development were observed. It revealed the following approaches; fiscal and monetary policies, exchange rate and balance of payments income policies. It then utilized National Development Plans, which spanned from the ten-year plan of development and welfare for Nigeria, which was colonial strategy to the first 1962-68, the second National Development Plan 1970-74, 1975-80, the third, 1981-85 being the fourth, and 1986-89 as the fifth. It was further observed that Nigeria adopted Perspective Planning with a three (3) year Rolling Plan 1989- 1990-1991 (Ayo, 1988 p.1). These were not sustainable. The case study, revealed that the observed strategies could not be sustained because of shortage of professional planners, financial constraints, plan indiscipline, paucity of data for planning, lack of mass commitment to the plan and inadequate public/private sector consultation (Ayo, 1988: p. 182) among others. The survey component showed Nigerian preferred the return of National Development Plan as a guide to sustainable national development. A study of sustainable development approaches in Singapore also revealed that Nigeria was yet to take major steps in this regard. The survey exposed the inadequacy of all previous and current approaches to development.

### **4. Accelerated Increase Paradigm**

The first step in order to make any development sustainable, certain indices is required within a paradigm. This to get the state to be robustly present in the economy, in order to stimulate the economy through investments in all the sectors. This is because the money governments spend over the budget would eventually come back to the national treasury in the form of enhanced tax revenue collected from increasingly profitable businesses and a rising number of well-paid employees as the economy grows (Sodaro, 2008 p. 354). This is against the backdrop that market forces and private enterprise alone are not enough to generate accelerated increase through Research and Development (R & D) required for sustainable development. Thus, where taxes are collected through effective tax administration, the State inadvertently recovers its investments. This not only wedge against unemployment, it reduces poverty.

The second element of accelerated increase of production in the economy for sustainable development is a 'Mixed Economy System' that combines both private enterprise and State involvement in the country's economic affairs. It is expected that the advantages of both the private and public sector would be gleaned for the benefit of the society over leaving the economy to one component. However, a balance must be established, at may be one with greater latitude granted to the private sector or vice versa, depending on the management competences available to the government. In order to stem the dearth of competences in the public sector to manage the numerous State Enterprises (Parastatals) that may be created the many sectors of the economy, public sector salary of ministers/politicians/top civil servants are to be harmonized with that of top professional in order to recruit and retain the best brains in the public sector as it was done in Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew.

The third element to accelerate the Plantain pathway to Sustainable development is the creation of educational opportunities, the acquisition of science based knowledge, and techniques are a sine qua none. This is required for scientific knowledge to manage the degraded environment, manage seed multiplication, create genetically modified seedlings towards food security, and redress the imbalance in the Sustainable Development equation (where on the one side of the development equation there is growing population, then on the other hand are decreasing food index, degrading environment and increasing extraction of natural resources), which require

to be balanced through sustainable development. Towards this end, the government should expand and subsidize education at all levels.

The fourth component to activate accelerated sustainable development are the establishment of industries, which would use the various natural resources as raw materials in each sector of the national economy. The raw materials should be converted through the value-chain processes to more useful forms in order to limit the rate of extractions from the earth. This process would enhance the balancing of the Sustainable development equation. These industries should be made to function through the various management approaches.

A State that is enroot accelerated Sustainable Development should operate through Sustainable Development Plan (SDP) which in this context mean a balanced development initiative between the urban centres and the rural areas in other to prevent the activation of the 'urban pull theory' that would overstretch the urban infrastructure. The dynamics of this process is to select the projects, which are tangential for sustainable development, identify their locations both in the urban, semi-urban and rural areas. This would ignite the Spinoff theory of rural development (Frank, 2015 p. 3). The logic is that Proper Planning Prevent Poor Performance (5ps). In the plan investment projects selected should have assumed the form of '*musa paradisiaca*' (plantain) with an elaborate value-chains to generate value addition at all levels.

Development of strong institutions Strong institutions are not only those operated on the Weberian principles, but one in which strong relevant laws support such institutions and possess no regulatory and institutional weaknesses. Though this is rare in Nigeria (this) is what is required for accelerated sustainable development. It is a truism that countries that have developed strong legal and institutional frameworks have performed better in terms of sustained growth and human development. As institution influence behaviour and incentives in real life, they forge the success or failure of nations. Individual talents matter but that require institutional framework to transform it into a positive force. Institutions must complement their talent. Institutions must make the financing of their projects feasible. Finally, the political institutions ensured stability and continuity. Also no particular interest could warp the government in an economically disastrous direction because political power was both limited and distributed sufficiently broadly that a set of economic institutions that created the incentives for prosperity could emerge (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012 p. 43). These are the variables to be activated to accelerate increase of within the paradigm of Plantain Theory of Sustainable Development.

The Value-Chains Infrastructure- It is imperative to state that the State's Development Plan should include 'resource mapping' and invest accordingly. The value-chains infrastructure required to deliver the product to the final consumer should be established. Leaving it to the private sector may not to be a wise option as profit is the determinant for private sector investment while this may not be true of the State at all time. The people must be involved in all the stages to accelerate the processes, this the way to get the chosen programmes and projects to be alive without the programme managers.

## 5. Nigeria Case Study

The study in this section cascade from the theoretical to the practical realm on how to put the above-accelerated postulations to use in Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria ruling elites should evolve and pursue the policy in which both the state and the private sector are to be equal participants in the economy. The State must assume a robust role, set the agenda of development, and recreate National Development Plan. The policy of Treasury Single Account (TSA) must be reviewed and the Banks and other financial (credit) institutions strengthened to provide the needed funds to the private sector to take off from the government stop. Now the lean private sector cannot make significant impact because they cannot access credits and the Banks do not have enough deposits to advance credits. The need for strong institutions cannot be overemphasised. Three elements make up this, the objective processes, the structure and punishment for the failure to observe the rules no matter whose ox is gored. Nigeria's record in this regard is woeful. For instance, recently in the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), there were illegal recruitment and secondment of staffers into the scheme. These done in violation of the Public Service Rules and other extant regulations. The recruited staffers were all from the Northern part of the country and were placed on levels far above the levels they were in the organizations they were recruited from (Olasinde, Feb. 2017 p. 24).

This is not possible where there is a strong institution that serves to regulate conduct, processes. It is to be noted that the pace of development in Nigeria was faster in the years of National Development Plans because fiscal resources were tied to specific projects. After the fifth development plan, Nigeria budgeted funds and at the end of the financial year, no feasible project is seen yet the funds had been expended. Accelerated increase of sustainable development requires a reinstatement of National Development Plan, with projects, which have multipliers effect (*musa paradisiaca*).

The expansion of educational opportunities in order to enhance sustainable development is a categorical imperative; this is because the various expertise required to conduct research and development (R & D) in the industries, agricultural institutions etc would emanate from here. Now the educational institutions in Nigeria deserve to be revamped and prepared for this task. These are some of the practical steps that would tend to accelerate Nigeria's movement into the stage of Sustainable Development on the platform of the plantain theory of sustainable development.

### **Infrastructural Development**

This refers to the provision of basic physical facilities, which connect the economy in various forms such as roads, electrical power, water, school etc, which are required for the normal operations of the society. They are to be provided in at least in the critical sectors to create a linkage between natural resource locations and processing centres. It would be recalled that, development plan had been canvassed herein. Infrastructures are to connect these locations to enhance evacuation at low cost. The provision of the infrastructure would have been planned in the National Development Plan, This would enhance sustainable development. An example of this postulation is that roads and electricity should connect locations known for large-scale production of cassava for instance. The area should also have cassava-processing plant whereby the cassava paste could be produced, dried, and marketed to (I) Food Industries for making (custard, baby food thickener). (ii) Non-Food Industries-(natural adhesive, alcohol, dried yeast, glucose syrup) (iii) Pharmaceutical could use the same cassava paste for medicinal purposes and coating drugs. This is an example of the value-chain in infrastructure provision.

**Project Selection:** The purpose of project conception is to find a unit of analysis which enables us, as circumstances permit, to ensure that project admitted into the Sustainable Development Plan is technically sound, provide reasonable economic and where appropriate, financial returns, that its objectives cannot be achieved in some less costly way (Ayo, 1988 p. 26), and that it helps to promote the overall Sustainable Development objectives of the State, Local and the Federal government pursuant to accelerated increase in overall Sustainable Development programmes. The rate of development is expected to be enhanced immensely with appropriate projects selected.

The last element, which would aid the acceleration of increase of the plantain theory of sustainable development, is individual and group discipline to abide by the processes and ethics of the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the society. These are the variables, which make for strong institutions.

### **6. The Challenges**

First, it is imperative to note that everything rises and ends with leadership. The greatest challenge is to have leaders who understand the essence and principles of accelerated increase of sustainable development. Leadership is having the authority to take initiative and go ahead of others. Leadership is entrusted with crafting out a vision for the rest of the relationship with followers. For the society to fulfil its purpose in an orderly manner. Leadership has responsibility to ensure that vision is drawn out and pursued with a sense of purpose, discipline and commitment. The leadership being implied in this context are those in corporation, organization, state or government who, are perceived as assuming the position of authority... can provide direction for other people. It is about giving direction, coordinating people and providing the motivation to move towards a destination. It is about steering people to provide the cooperation required in the pursuit and realizing of specific objectives from which they will equally benefit (Akinkuowo, 2013 p. 130). Nigeria is, however, bereft of leaders with these qualities who could understand and follow the principles of sustainable development.

The challenge of industrialisation in the face of the prevailing ideology of 'Washington Consensus' which regard the private sector as the engine of growth. Industries are critical to transform crude products into more useful forms. However, Nigeria like other African countries have been classified as non-industrial countries, in which industry accounts for less than 10 per cent of the GNP.

By these standards, in 1977 no African country was industrialised, 16 were in course of industrialisation, 21 were non-industrialised and the rest semi-industrialised (Lagos Plan of Action, 1982).

It is important to know that without industrialisation, it would be impossible to achieve the stage of mass production and consumption in the development process, generated from the accelerated paradigm of sustainable development. Industries are necessary for both upstream and downstream utilization of all crude products extracted from the earth to meet the basic needs of the people and move towards self-reliance. Public policies are deliberate actions by government to establish new transaction patterns or institutions or a change in established patterns within old institutions (Egonmwan, 2002 p. 147). Given that, the variables of accelerated increase in sustainable development have clearly defined goals and programme of actions, its implementation should be derived from the public policy institutional framework. One factor that may significantly confront the realization of the goals of accelerated increase in sustainable development is corruption of the governing elites. This is because at all level of governance in Nigeria; local, State and Federal governments, corruption of the ruling elites is one single idea, which run through these levels of governance, and 'arrest resources' meant for development. Corruption could therefore be termed 'arrested development'. This deliberate act of arresting fiscal resources (evidence abounds with the EFCC) meant for development had stalled development efforts in the past and is likely to confront this one significantly.

The challenge of project selection, which seems peculiar to Nigeria, is that of political project selection. Projects selected on political consideration are often not viable and not appropriate for the location or circumstances. It is important to ensure those projects are selected based on Return on Investment for sustainable development.

Lastly, projects selections for accelerated increase in the rate of sustainable development should be without political consideration. In this context, 'Benefit Measurement Method (BMM), and Benefit/Cost Ratio, these are the relevant criteria in this context. It is concerned with Return on Investment (ROI). In view of paucity of funds, accelerated increase paradigm of Sustainable Development. All projects selected for funding in this context, must be one with 'a Pareto improvement defined as a change in economic organization that makes everyone better off-or more precisely, that makes one or more members of society better off without making anyone worse off. It is in other words, a change, which produces gains that exceed in value the accompanying losses (Mishan, 1974 p. 14). The point here is that projects selected should have multiplier effect or value addition in order to reduce the rate of extraction of natural resources from the earth and add-value to the available resources to obtain Return on Investment and ensure the citizens are better off than they previously were, without making anyone worse off than they were.

## **7. Conclusion**

It had been noted that while the Plantain Theory of Sustainable Development laid the pathway to Sustainable development, certain variables were required to be infused into the system in order to accelerate and increase the attainment of the gains therein. Every development plan actions that directly embody the spoken will of people would naturally gain their partnership, energy and dedication. This is because decisions in which the people contribute to rendering generally reflect the participants' aspirations and interests. Thus, people's active participation in creating the projects that fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals which is ultimately the essential basis upon which the Sustainable Development Goals could come into fruition, expand, and uplift the society should be pursued.

Thus, we have to set in motion across the land participatory democratic meetings of local communities of people so that they identify, prioritize, and implement sustainable development projects. It must be borne in mind that the government must out of relative awareness of the prevailing global idea of development, be involved in the acceleration of increase in the pace of plantain principles of sustainable development. This would be in contradiction to the prevailing ideas of the 'Washington Consensus' which identifies the private sector as the only engine of growth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economic development.

Sustainable Development Plan in this context must assume the form in which the ‘Marshall Plan’ assumed in the resuscitation of the European economy. It must invest, monitor until each sector comes alive and appropriate the value generated in all sectors of the economy. It must more importantly, create the value-chains required to add value in all sectors so as to minimise the quantum of extraction of resources from the earth. Accelerating increase through the mechanics of plantain theory of sustainable development is thus, a sure way to achieving not only food security for Nigeria, but also development, which addresses poverty, unemployment, inequality and self-reliance without depleting resources at the expense of the future generation. The governing elites should learn the lessons and desist from conspiring to misgovern. This would remain the plan of actions for accelerating increase in Sustainable Development in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

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