

Population Growth, Urbanization and Unemployment in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigerian population has been growing rapidly. One of the reasons has been due to unemployment crisis as many relocate to urban areas in search of greener pastures. This movement from one location to the other has seriously caused problems especially in the urban areas. However, rapid urbanization, particularly the growth of large cities and the associated problems of unemployment, poverty, inadequate health care, poor sanitation, urban slums and environmental degradation pose a formidable challenge in developing countries like Nigeria. Those moving from one location and mostly to urban locations constitute certain classes, categories and strata of the society. Natural resources are vanishing fast due to excessive urbanization, in addition, excessive automation too becoming culprit to prune job opportunities. Neglecting rural sectors, urban based research & planning and education system generated urban employment opportunities, causing more than half of world population to live in urban cities. Therefore, this paper will look into the consequences as well as measures to overcome the challenge of population growth, urbanization and unemployment in Nigeria.

Keywords: Population Growth, Urbanization, Unemployment, Environmental Degradation, Poverty

Introduction

Globally, studies indicate that at the dawn of the twenty –first century, the world's population was estimated to be almost 6.1 billion people. Projections by the United Nations placed the figure at more than 9.2 billion by the year 2050 before reaching a maximum of 11 billion by 2200. Over 90% of that population will inhabit the developing world (Todaro & Smith, 2006).

Moreover, many years ago population growth and production were positively correlated. More people meant greater productivity and security (Latimer, & Kulkarni, 2008). The modernization and technological advancement of contemporary world is highly attributable to centuries of rapid population growth and economic expansion. Hundreds of years ago, when societies and economies began to flourish, success was dependent upon a productive agricultural sector. A growing population meant more workers and laborers who would increase overall output. However, with more productive labour, the economy inevitably expanded and society reaped the financial benefits. Centuries ago, population booms were positive indications of the potential for long term economic growth. It also shows that high fertility rates during these times allowed for increased labourers and also helped overcome the correspondingly exorbitant death rates. The combined effects of famine, disease, malnutrition, plague and war resulted in death rates that were high and inconsistent. Given the lack of modern medicine that many countries faced until recently, death rates remained relatively high for several centuries. Thus, in order to have any net population growth and eventual economic development, fertility rates had to be elevated (Latimer & Kulkarni, 2008).

However, in the twentieth century, modernization and technological expansion allowed societies to gain control of the ailments that previously killed large percentages of the population. Suddenly, societies were equipped to overcome famine, malnutrition, and other life threatening

diseases. Rapid technological advances in modern medicine and sanitation drastically reduced global mortality rates. Increased technology also improved labour productivity. This combination of both technological and medical improvements set the conditions for unprecedented booms in world population growth. Despite the rapid decrease in mortality rates, global fertility rates remained constant and caused exponential growth within the global population and no longer do birth rates struggle to keep up with death rates. Currently, global fertility rates far outweigh mortality rates, forcing the world to confront serious population growth issues. The world's population of almost 7 billion people is placing a huge strain on natural resources. Unfortunately, the projections for the future do not appear to be improving (Dao 2012).

According to United Nations **F Population A** (1999), Nigeria with an estimated population of 170 million people, is the seventh most populous country in the world. The country has a very youthful age structure, with nearly three-quarters of its population under the age of 30. Even if its fertility and mortality rates decline substantially, Nigeria will still have a youthful age structure which is projected to increase by 40% in by 2025. Without effective population policy to reduce the high fertility rate, Nigeria will become among the fourth or fifth most populous country in the world with a projected population of almost 400 million by 2050.

Nigeria is one of the fastest growing countries in the world, with an estimated population of 140 million in 2006, and an annual population growth rate of 2.9% (National Population Commission, 2006). Nigeria as a high fertility country, with all the evidence that its large population inhibits government's efforts in meeting the basic needs of the people. That is, a considerable proportion of the country's resources are, doubtless, consumed instead of being accumulated as capital for development purposes. To that extent, the rate of development lags

behind that of population growth, which triggers stagnation in social service delivery. This necessarily impedes whatever progress being achieved in the fight against poverty.

Conceptual Clarifications

Unemployment

Standing (1983) and Fajana (2000), opined that unemployment can be describe as the state of wordlessness experienced by persons who are members of the labour force who perceived themselves and are perceived by others as capable of work. According to Udu and Agu (2005), unemployment is a situation of unavailability of suitable paid employment for persons capable and willing to work.. As defined by International Labour Organisation (2007), unemployed workers are those who are currently not working but are willing and able to work for pay, currently available to work and have actively search for work. Hornby (2010), defined unemployment as condition in which a population of people are not having a job are without a job. It is the state of not having a job. Adebayo (1999) in Bakare (2011), defined unemployment as a state in which people who can work are without jobs and are seeking for pay or profit. This definition gives rise to the problem of measurement, especially when one is interested in knowing the average rate of unemployment in the economy over a period of time. Unemployed people can be grouped into those who have never worked after graduation from the university and those who have lost their jobs thereby seeking re-entry into labour market.

Urbanization

According to Mabogunje, (2004), urbanization is a process of agglomeration in multi-functional human settlement of relatively substantial size. Urbanization can be seen as expansion of the total population residing in urban areas. However, according to Ujoh, Kwabe, and Ifatimehin (2010) in Jiboye (2011), urbanization is the process which refers to the growth in size and numbers of urban

area. This process has been responsible for transformation in towns and cities, as well as depopulating the rural areas by rural-urban migration (Adesina 2003). Adegun (2011) describes the level of urbanization as part of a country's total population that resides in urban areas.

Population growth

Population growth can be defined as an increase in the number of people that reside in a country, state, county, or city. Growing population will create a large market for goods and services. Many people mean large demand for commodities and services. There will be high number of consumers. Demand for food, clothing and shelter will be on the increase. Moreover, demand for materials being used by children will also increase. A rapidly growing population always has large number of children. According to 1991 population census of Nigeria, 45% of the total population fall into 0-14 years age group. Therefore, there will be an increasing demand for toys and children wear (Ogujiuba & Kanayo, 2005)

Consequences of Population Growth in Nigeria

The Consequences and effects of population growth on economic development differ between the developed and developing countries. In the developed countries, population growth has enhanced the growth of such economies because they are wealthy, have abundant capital and scarcity of labour. On the contrary, the consequences of rapid population growth on the development of less developed countries (LDC) are not the same. Most developing countries are poor, capital scarce and labour abundant; and therefore population growth adversely affects their economic development.

Precisely, every increase in population has led to more problems than benefits especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the negative effects of population growth include:

High population growth rates require massive investment in social infrastructure. Due to the shortage of investment funds, social infrastructure like agriculture, education, health, transport, environment and housing likely to decrease. This results in overcrowding and declining quality of services and therefore mitigating (Ahuja, 2008).

Ordinarily, this growth in population would not be a cause for concern since in certain circumstances, a large population could be to the advantage of a country in terms of the sheer size of its domestic market, better division of labour, increased productivity through improvement in the ratio of labour force to population as well as enhancement of its political and military power. A large population also diversifies the demand for products and services and promotes the tendency to increasing returns to scale, thereby raising economic development (Yesufu, 2000).

Economic Watch (2013), indicates that Nigeria's large population has development implications. To begin with, it does not augur well for planning purposes because plans only succeed when the implementation is pursued with reliable data but in the Nigerian experience, the unreliability of demographic data makes plan implementation a futile exercise in the country

Rapid population growth in Nigeria is equally associated with unemployment with figures ranging from 17 per cent per annum for the entire population to 60 per cent for the youths because job opportunities are fewer than the number seeking for them, and stagnating economic performance because a larger proportion of available resources is consumed instead of invested to generate growth (Central Bank of Nigeria 2009).

Rapid population growth also poses continuous pressure on resources, particularly on agricultural land. For instance, due to high density of people in the Eastern States of Nigeria as much as 53 per cent of the farming population cultivate less than 0.4 hectares in a given year and in the more congested areas of these states most farmers cultivate only 0.2 hectares per year. The

result is fragmentation of farmlands and their subdivision into smaller plots to accommodate the growing farming populace. With time, the small plots would become untenable for even subsistence farming, forcing those concerned to move into marginal soils, where greater degradation takes place with attendant reduction in agricultural output (Akinbode, 2002; Madu, 2005).

Although the data are sometimes ambiguous on this point, it is generally agreed that large family size and low incomes restrict the opportunities of parents to educate all their children. At the national level, rapid population growth causes the spread of given educational expenditures which lowers quality for the sake of quantity. This in turn feeds back on economic growth because the stock of human capital is reduced by rapid population growth. However, because of the slashes in educational expenditures, also investments have not meet with the demands of the education sector as a result of large population. In effect, infrastructures have been overstretched; causing dilapidation and inadequate teaching materials and understaffing engender deterioration in learning outcomes. Many eligible candidates are also denied admission into Nigerian universities, polytechnics and colleges of education due to inadequate facilities.

High fertility harms the health of mothers and children. It increases the health risks of pregnancy, and closely spaced births have been shown to reduce birth weight and increases child mortality rates. The health sector suffers the same investment fatigue, with aggregate growth rates of 2 per cent and 1.2 per cent for the capital and recurrent expenditures respectively for the period between 1985 and 2002, being lower than the population growth rate of 3 per cent (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2003). Little wonder that public health institutions are overburdened by operational costs per capita. Overuse negatively impacts on the physical conditions of their facilities and the growing number of patients reduces the availability of drugs in hospitals, overwhelms the

laboratories and machines employed in medical practice with attendant inefficiency in health care delivery.

Feeding the world's population is made more difficult by rapid population growth as over 90% of additional food requirements are caused by population increases in LDC. New technologies of production must be introduced more rapidly, as the best lands have already been cultivated. International food relief programs become more widespread.

Rapid population growth contributes to environmental degradation in the form of forest encroachment, deforestation, fuel-wood depletion, soil erosion, declining fish and animal stocks, inadequate and unsafe water, air pollution, and urban congestion.

Many observers consider the rapid increase in international migration, both legal and illegal, to be one of the major consequences of developing countries' population growth. Though many factors cause migration, an excess of job seekers (caused by rapid population growth) over job opportunities is one of the causes in the LDC economy is surely one of them. However, unlike the first six consequences listed here, some of the economic and social costs of international migration fall on recipient countries- increasingly in the developed world. It is not surprising, therefore, that this issue has recently taken on political importance in North America and Europe (Todaro and Smith, 2006).

Measures to Overcome the Challenge of Population Growth, Urbanization and Unemployment in Nigeria

Developing employment options

High levels of youth unemployment have created a social problem considering limited economic opportunities in many African countries (Eguavoen, 2010). Consequently, economic growth and employment have become development imperatives for urban areas. According to

Hove, Ngwerume and Muchemwa (2013), to accomplish economic growth and employment imperatives for urban areas will require significant expansion of the formal private sector, which remains underdeveloped in most African countries. It will also require the encouragement and facilitation of much higher levels of private investment. In the long run, countries cannot compete internationally on the basis of a largely informal economy.

It is therefore incumbent on governments to create an enabling environment for private enterprise and investment. National and local policies can have a significant impact in this regard. It is difficult for enterprises to be competitive if transport costs are high, if corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies result in delays and higher costs and if services are unreliable. However, the private sector in Sub-Saharan Africa has to continuously increase its efficiency and productivity if it is to be internationally competitive. According to Hove, Ngwerume and Muchemwa (2013), government policies can help the development of the private sector in urban areas not only through targeted interventions but also through general policies designed to remove bottlenecks, streamline procedures and protect property rights. The degree to which private businesses in African cities have to be self-sufficient in terms of providing the power, transport and security services that local and national authorities should reach is often not fully understood.

Given the prominent problem of unemployment in the majority of cities, the encouragement of labor-intensive investments should be an important aspect of public policy. The responsibility for the enactment of legislation aimed at investment promotion rests with the central government. Various incentives, including tax privileges, could be created to stimulate the adoption of labor-intensive investments (e.g., special tariffs for public utilities), and creating forums for public-private dialogue and consultation. Additionally, the promotion of secondary cities and rural towns through improved spatial planning offers potential for urban employment

opportunities and different devices for family planning should be available and they should be accessible to people. Those kinds of programs should be launched to convince people for the use of family planning devices.

Improving urban facilities

In principle, fundamental and essential social services should be available to all. In some cases lack of jobs or income partly explains the exclusion of many poor urban dwellers from urban facilities like clinics, schools and public housing. However, the public provision of social services, even to those who can afford them, is seriously hampered by inadequate physical facilities, poor maintenance and inefficient institutional arrangements. Transport, energy, communications and water supply are among the other municipal services that are often inadequately provided. Furthermore, dissatisfied customers of utilities are reluctant to pay user charges, and may feel justified in evading municipal levies and taxes. The private sector is unlikely to invest or expand its operations under such conditions. This erodes the tax base, which in turn means that governments both at the central and local levels find themselves with insufficient funds to maintain or upgrade existing facilities (World Bank, 2011). As revenues are not likely to increase in the short term, authorities will have to focus on improving policies as well as, management and the effective use of existing resources. Adequate attention and resources should be devoted to the maintenance of existing facilities, and not just to the creation of new infrastructure.

One crucial issue is the provision of public services in slums and illegal housing areas. In many cases, even when such settlements are permitted by the government, municipal authorities fail to provide services for these areas. In some cases, however, policy changes have led to radical improvements. In these examples, the provision of basic services within the slum areas has led to

an overall upgrading of slums, and even to collection of rent. Some local authorities registered considerable success in providing affordable housing through 'site and service' arrangements, which allow residents to upgrade when they can afford to do so.

In the long term, the adequacy of services and infrastructure will likely be significant factors in the prosperity, as well as livability of cities. Municipal authorities usually indicate that they lack the resources to upgrade infrastructure. Oftentimes, poor planning and lack of innovation confound these challenges. Lack of long-term, city-wide planning often results in piecemeal and ad hoc interventions as well as substantial disparities in terms of service provision within cities. Conversely, a long-term development strategy can help municipal authorities to provide adequate service coverage in a cost-effective manner, taking advantage of economies of scale and existing networks. It can also help to balance environmental concerns with the needs of urban populations. Much of the environmental degradation evident in major cities results from lack of planning or adherence to regulatory standards.

To help reduce urban poverty, it is important that consideration be given to improving access to basic services within entire cities. Current managerial arrangements in many urban areas preclude this, leading to competition among administrative structures for existing resources, often to the detriment of poor areas. Dialogue between municipal authorities and communities, along with monitoring and feedback on delivery, has helped to improve provision of infrastructure and service in some cities by better defining needs, encouraging citizen participation, and reducing corruption (Babcock 2008). Throughout the world, public-private partnerships have become increasingly important vehicles for the provision of urban infrastructure. Provided they are well designed and managed, such ventures have generally been successful. Additionally, in many cities

the responsibility for certain functions such as waste collection have been contracted out to private operators, with great success at improving service provision and stimulating private enterprise.

Strengthening Rural-Urban linkages

Maximising the positive aspects of urbanisation and minimising the negative requires strategic planning and management at the municipal level, supported by effective systems for the collection of data and information. However, it also depends on the coherence of national policies and promotion of the synergies between urban and rural areas within a broad development framework. This may include strategies to support the growth of small towns and secondary cities, complementing the trend toward decentralisation. While this will not necessarily reduce the overall rate of urbanisation, it will change the spatial distribution of urban populations, limiting the pressure on capital cities and major urban centres, and perhaps also reducing levels of urban poverty. Turok and Parnell argue that the purpose of an urban policy is not to marginalize rural areas but rather to ensure that national strategy takes account of major societal shifts that make urban and rural areas more interdependent. As such, urban policy should complement rather than contradict rural development initiatives (Turok & Parnell, 2009).

The improvement of transport and communications networks, together with the development of small towns and secondary cities to provide accessible markets for agricultural produce could serve to strengthen rural economies and help to boost rural-urban linkages. At the same time, policies to improve agricultural productivity and stimulate non-farm employment are central to reducing rural poverty. If rural-urban migration is to be stemmed and the wellbeing of rural populations improved, a more diversified employment structure is needed. Policies that address land use and tenure, as well as those that improve access to markets, credit and agricultural inputs, would help to reduce this well-established flow of migration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Federal Government should look beyond oil and diversifying the economy, an understatement. There is need to resuscitate the olden days groundnut pyramids in the North, cocoa plantations in the West and the oil palm plantations in the Eastern part of the country. This will provide the much-needed employment for our youth in addition to opening up more opportunities for growth in the nation's economy. The government may not be able to create job enough for the teeming millions of Nigerian unemployed youths, and therefore should embark upon massive youth development programmes in all the states of the federation. Furthermore, it is necessary for the government to embark on rural development such as rural industrialization and electrification to curtail rural-urban drift. The general school curriculum should be remodeled to inculcate technical skill acquisition which will help even secondary school graduates to have employable skills. Youth creativeness and entrepreneurial skills need to be encouraged by private organizations and government institutions. Government should make agriculture more attractive by providing and making available modernized tools and also encouraging youths into this direction. Nigeria is blessed with both natural and human resources in this country and the most prominent one is crude oil, government should resuscitate the four local refineries and create more, so that youths can get employed and also be trained on how to refine crude oil into usable items such as kerosene, petroleum, among others. This will generate revenue and also reduce unemployment.

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