

Development of Rural Periodic Market Centres: An Effective Strategy for Rural Development in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Traditional periodic markets have a long history in Rivers State. The reason for the establishment and geographical spread of these markets was to enhance the distribution of commodities produced locally with the primary objective of expanding the local economic base of the rural people. Beside commerce they also serve as centres for exchange of ideas and civilization through social and political interaction. For these purposes they generate high traffic flow and had opened up channels of interaction with the outside world. It is therefore accepted by this research that with such high traffic flow and interaction, the development of these periodic market centres through infrastructural location will help promote development from “below” in the State. Development from “below” has become inevitable in the face of the high level of rural poverty that had astronomically fuelled rural-urban migration in Rivers State. This will also help in reducing the population pressure on Port Harcourt which had over the years been the only primate city in the State. This paper is a product of an intense field research. Information from the field helped greatly in the success of the paper. The residual knowledge of the researcher in the subject matter couple with the work of previous scholars also helped greatly. Primary data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire directed at the buyers and sellers in the periodic markets. Oral discussion through face-to-face interview with the rural dwellers in the study areas was also employed where necessary. Focus group discussion in the form of “town hall” meetings with representatives of sample communities was also employed to derive relevant information. Aside from some difficulties experienced due to the geography of the State, the research was a success as the response rate was very high.

Keyword: Development, Market, Rivers State, City, Rural

1.Introduction.

Development policies of successive governments in Nigeria since its creation have been one characterized by development strategy from the “top”. This strategy has helped to create a wide gap between social strata in the country. This trend has also created a wide disparity in spatial development between geographical areas in the country. It had also encouraged the colossal concentration of development efforts in the modern sector of the economy at the expense of investment in the rural economic base (Smock and Smock,1972; Dekor,2015). This has left the rural areas of the country with serious problems of misery, poverty, and underdevelopment. It is clear that “most basic needs are territorially organized and manifest themselves most intensely at the level of small social groups and local or regional communities” (Stohr 1981). Therefore facilitating development from “below” could have been a better option by which the productivity, income, welfare or other life of comfort of rural people can be improved upon. Unfortunately this strategy has not been given adequate attention by those appointed or elected to manage public resources in the country. During the colonial era rural development efforts were tied to take the form of community development and later agricultural extension (Williams,1978). While the former took the shape of self help to improve community welfare, the later was shaped to improve agricultural productivity. The underlying motive of both was to feed European industries. After independence the story was not different. Rural development in the early years of independence was synonymous with agricultural development initiated by the government. They were basically in response to improving export commodity earning. The strategy was miles away from addressing the various dimensions of sustainable rural development. There was no concrete plan to invest in human development to alleviate the cycle of poverty characterizing rural Nigeria. Rivers State which is predominantly rural settlement with 80% of her population living in small and scattered hamlets is a picture of poverty and underdevelopment. The State is one of the States in the deltaic region very rich in oil yet the greater part of her population is cut off from the basic necessity to descent living. Development efforts are targeted at Port Harcourt, the only city in the State leaving other areas “infrastructurally naked and backward” (Onyegun and Akpogemeh 2009; Kio-Lawson,2014). Development of rural periodic market centers is one way through which development from “below” could be encouraged in the State. Rural periodic market is seen as an institutionalized activity occurring at a definite place and involving the meeting of people at a particular time or an authorized public concourse of buyers and sellers of commodities meeting at a place more or less strictly limited or defined at an appointed time (Hodder and Ukwu, 1969). Such description exclude “those innumerable small places of ad hoc trading involving a handful of women meeting at

street corner, in front of compound or on building sites” (Hodder and Ukwu,1969) Traditional periodic market play very important role in the social and economic landscape of Africa. They are a “source of growth, a school of entrepreneurship and a device for distributing scale and other economies”(Park,1982). They inevitably shape local social organization and provide one of the crucial modes for integrating myriad peasant communities into a single social system” (Jackson,1971). In Rivers State, traditional periodic markets are vital economic and social institutions that facilitate the perpetuation of social relationship. Their method of organization, operation and structuring differ from one geographical region to another. The same can be said about the factors influencing their origin and product types but unarguably they possess the same value today. Despite the astronomical rate of rural-urban migration, rural periodic markets had continued to enjoy high patronage. They had also evolved over the years to record some significant changes in size, character, economic function and roles which cannot be ignored in the overall economy of the State. Considering the pains and night mares associated with the existence of one city in Rivers State it is within the suggestion of this paper that the provision of economic and social infrastructure in periodic market centres will increase their economic viability and transform such communities into growth centres. It is clear that economic, physical and social infrastructure can have a positive effect on primary income generation in micro-economy. Such infrastructure will help rural household income to improve. This positive improvement will reflect on household welfare especially health, education and nutrition. On the long run this will help reduce rural- urban migration, and reduce the population pressure on the primate city of Port Harcourt.

2. Method and Technique

A listing of all the notable periodic markets was made as a first step. A total of 73 notable periodic markets were listed. The State is politically segmented into two regions; upland and riverine. This dichotomy was followed in the listing process. A total of 55 notable periodic markets were identified in the upland area and 18 markets in the riverine area. The upland area is mostly made up of farming communities and this accounts for the high number of periodic markets listed in the area. The riverine area is mostly made up of fishing communities. Numerals were assigned to the markets in each area and a simple random sampling adopted to pick the markets for our study. A total of 15 periodic markets representing 20 percent of the total number were picked for study; 4 markets from the riverine area and 11 markets from the upland area. Our target population in the periodic markets is made up of sellers and buyers. Data were collected on the socio-economic status of the respondents, characteristics of periodic markets, product types, mode and pattern of operation, and their traditional roles. A total of 2250 copies of structured questionnaire were evenly distributed to the sellers in the sample markets to obtain primary information. The same number was equally administered to the buyers in the sample markets bringing the total to 4500 copies of questionnaire. For the purpose of questionnaire administration numbers were assigned to the identified market stalls in the sample periodic markets and a systematic random sampling used to pick our respondents. In each market after the first market stall where the first seller and buyer were interviewed an interval of one is used to pick the next respondents. Relevant information were extracted and used for this study with the aid of descriptive statistics. Cross tabulations and charts are used to explain frequencies of occurrences of responses to the individual questions.

Oral discussion as well as “Focus group” discussion which took the form of “Town hall” meeting in each sample periodic market community was also employed. Each town hall meeting was made up of five representatives of each community; a representative of the followings;

- Elders council
- Highest youth body in the community,
- Market women
- Faith based organization
- Political class

The representatives were invited through key informants. The purpose was to get supplementary information relevant to the study.

3. Rivers State and the Rural Communities

Rivers State was an integral part of the Oil Rivers Protectorate from 1885 till 1893 when it became part of the Niger Coast Protectorate. In 1900 it became part of the regions that were merged to form the colony of Southern Nigeria. The State was among the twelve States created on May 27th, 1967 by the regime of Gen. Yakubu Gowon when the regional structure was dissolved. In 1996, a part of the State was carved out to form Bayelsa State. Rivers State with a population of over 3million people(NPC 1996) is predominantly made up of farming and fishing rural communities scattered south of the deltaic region of Southern Nigeria. The State is politically segmented into 23 Local Government Council. There are a total of 1108 rural communities occupying a land mass of 11,077square kilometers out of which about 75% is under water while only 5% is occupied by human population. Small units of agricultural land exist in the north and eastern part of the State. With high rainfall and poor drainage, virtually all parts of the State experiences one form of flooding or the other every year. The State is rich in oil and has contributed immensely to the economic development of Nigeria since the discovery of oil in the region in 1958. Despite the economic benefit arising from the land both to the Nigeria State and multi-national oil companies doing business in the State, its rural areas have been a picture of deprivation and poverty. Rural Rivers State lacked basic infrastructure; potable water, electricity, communication, roads to link them with the outside world for commerce and social interaction. The exploration of oil in rural Rivers State has brought forth degradation of its land, soil, water, crops and animals.

They drink most often from rivers and rivulets which have been polluted through the activities of oil exploration (OMPADEC,1993). It is true sometimes the people are compensated for this damage on their land and water but the argument has been that the amount paid as compensation to the rural people most often were hardly enough when compared with the economic tragedy suffered by the people(Ademola, 2008) }. While unemployment among the rural youths is very high, there is a corresponding level of frustration that has risen to a crises point between the youths and the Nigerian State on one hand and between the rural youths and the multi-national oil companies on the other hand. Developmental policies and programmes of successive administration in the State had favoured the State capital at the expense of the hinterland. Policies targeted at consciously developing the rural areas never lived beyond the administration that initiated it. The first military administrator of the State, Alfred Diette Spiff had admitted the backwardness of the rural areas of the State in his budget speech “it will be a cardinal point of my government policy to bring the benefits of modern utilities to the rural areas of the state. This measure will be the first step in the development of the sadly neglected areas of the State which with purposeful planning could be transformed into beautiful cities and tourist attraction”(Government of Rivers State,1968). Beautiful as the vision of the military administrator was it never endured beyond the life of that administration. Successive policies tailored towards this direction have followed the same path. While the rural areas have continued to suffer neglect, Port Harcourt, the State capital has continued to receive the favour of developmental policies; colossal concentration of economic and service infrastructure. Today, it is enjoying the status of being the only primate city in the State. This explains the reason for its rapid population growth and the attendant problems associated with it.

4. Origin of Periodic Markets in Rivers State

The people of Rives State, south of the deltaic region of Nigeria are predominantly rural and agrarian. The history of periodic market in this southern Ijaw State though could not be told with any degree of certainty; they date back to several centuries. Their existence can be partly attributed to the traditional occupation of the people; predominantly fishing and farming. Each clan has its own area of specialization in agricultural productivity. Within each clan and between clans there is specialization in production. Every market is seen as very important in commercial exchange within each clan and between clans. The distance between clans and the mode of rural transportation in this part of the country contributes greatly to the productivity of each clan and the status of each periodic market. While commercial transaction within a village takes place daily, periodic markets allow clans or communities to trade in those commodities in which it has absolute advantage in a fixed location and in return purchase those items which are needed but not produced within their geographical confine or clan.

Insecurity is also another contributing factor to the development of rural periodic market in the State. Inter tribal wars were common features among the communities in the region. It was mainly fuelled by the passion to expand territorial influence among kings and to conquer more servants for their kingdom. These servants were needed by the kings to boast their trading prowess and to provide more labour for extensive agriculture. They were also needed to provide internal security as well as to fortify the military prowess of kings against external aggression.

Rufus Evans, a 89year old traditional bone doctor from Elele community and one of our respondents revealed that “security was the greatest reason why our fathers had chosen to trade with one another in locations where

they could easily protect one another in the face of any aggression from another clan. Because at that time there was the craze

Table 1 Notable periodic markets in Rivers State

Market	Market Days	Dominant Agricultural Products	Local Government Area	Community/Centre in which Market is located
Kwangah	Three days interval	Cassava,maize and palm oil	Gokana	Bera
K-Dere		Vegetables,garri, corn	Gokana	K-Dere
Biarra	Four days interval	Fish, cassava, yam	Gokana	Biarra
B-Dere		Yam,vetables,garri	Gokana	B-Dere
Bodo	Four days interval	Fish, garri,vegetabvles	Gokana	Bodo
Yeghe		Cassava, cocoyam,fruits	Gokana	Yeghe
Eke	Every eight days	Cassava,plantain,oil	Ahoada East	Ochigha
Eke	Every eight days	Garri, fish, oil	Ahoada East	Ogbele
Izu	Eight days interval	Firewood, Crayfish, garri	Ahoada East	Izu
Ungeada	Twice weekly	Fish, palmoil, perewinkles	Andoni	Ungeada
Oyorokoto	Three days interval	Palmoil, fish, perewinkle	Andoni	Oyorokoto
Ayoewe	Twice weekly	Firewood, garri, dryfish	Andoni	Ngo
Usen-ewi	Twice weekly	Palmoil, plantain, fish	Andoni	Useni-ewi
Ataba	Every Wednesday	Water snail, fish, plantain	Andoni	Ataba
Ikuru	Every monday	Yam, periwinkle,fish	Andoni	Ikuru
Ahia-Nkwo	Every four days	Plantain,cassava, yam	Emuohua	Emuohua
Ahia Otukpo	Five days interval	Plantain, yam, maize	Emuohua	Ibaa
Ahia Rumuji	Eight days interval	Garri, yam, maize	Emuohua	Rumuiji
Ahia Obele	Eight days interval	Yam, plantain,banana	Emuohua	Obele
Ahia Elele Alimini	Eight days interval	Cassava, Palm oil,garri	Emuohua	Elele Alimini
Okporowo		Vegetables, garri, Palm oil	Emuohua	Okporowo
Ubimini	Weekly	Garri, Palmoil, vegetable	Emuohua	Ubimini
Ndele	Weekly	Vegetable, fruits, garri	Emuohua	Ndele
Elibrada	Weekly	Fish, cassava tubers,garri	Emuohua	Elibrada
Ahai	Weekly	Garri, palm oil, Garri	Emuohua	Ahia
Awhor	Four days interval	Palm oil, cassava, plantain	Emuohua	Rumuodogo
Ogbogoro	Saturday	Yam, plantain, cassava	Obio-Akpo	Ogbogoro
Okpuruta	Every Saturday	Palmoil,garri, plantain	Degema	Degema
Anangulogo	Twice weekly	Cassava, plantain,fish	Degema	Bukuma
Kaa	Two days interval	Yam, plantain, fruits	Khana	Kaa
Bori	Twice a week	Garri, vegetables and fish	Khana	Bori
Uegwere	Weekly	Palmoil, cassava, plantain	Khana	Uegwere
Deekor	Five days interval	Garri, palm oil, yam	Khana	Kono Boue
Sogho	Weekly	Garri, cassava, plantain	Khana	Sogho
Du-Deezia	Every eight days	Livestock, fish, garri	Khana	Luabara
Du-Demua	Weekly	Yam,maize, garri	Khana	Luabara
Ahiaezi	Every eight days	Yam, cassava, vegetables	Ikwerre	Isiokpo
Oriembiri	Eight days interval	Yam,cassava tubers, plantain	Ikwerre	Omadame
Elele	Eight days interval	Crayfish, yam, cassava	Ikwerre	Elele
Ahia Odu	Four days interval	Yam, maize, cassava	Ikwerre	Igwuruta
Nkwo	Four days interval	Yam,plantain,cassava	Etche	Obite
Chokoche	Every Thursday	Garri, cassava, cassava tubers	Etche	Chokoche
Ahia Ogwumabiri	Eight days interval	Yam, garri, cassava	Etche	Ozuzu
Eketa	Weekly	Yam, cassava, cocoyam	Etche	Eketa

Edegelem	Twice weekly	Cassava, cassava tuber, plantain	Etche	Edegelem
Imeh	Twice weekly	Fruits, Cassava, plantain	Etche	Imeh
Umuluebulu	Twice weekly	Okro, plantain, cassava	Etche	Umuluebulu
Okoroagu	Every Thursday	Coconut, fruits, cassava	Etche	Okoroagu
Olakwu	Every wednesday	Palm fruit, palm oil, cassava	Etche	Olakwu
Isu	Weekly	Palmnuts, Fish, garri	Etche	Isu
Kalasiunji	Weekly	Fish, plantain, snail	Opobo/Nkoro	Kalasiunji
Igwenga	Weekly	Garri, palmoil, cassava	Opobo/Nkoro	Andoni
Ogwabiri	Twice weekly	Perewinkle, plantain, fish	Opobo/Nkoro	Opobo
Adaposie	Every Saturday	Perewinkle, vegetables, fish	Bonny	Bonny
Agaja	Twice weekly	Smoked fish, cassava, garri	Bonny	Bonny
Bonny main market	Every Tuesday	Plantain, fresh fish, yam	Bonny	Bonny
Ayanmo	Every Friday	Garri, Fish, periwinkle	Bonny	Bonny
Abalamabie	Every Thursday	Palm oil, vegetable, yam	Bonny	Abalamabie
Finima	Every Thursday	Fish, palm oil, perewinkle	Bonny	Finima
Mgbeda	four days interval	Cassava, vegetables, garri	Ogba/Ndoni	Mgbede
Aggah	Four days interval	Yam, cocoyam, three leaf yam	Ogba/Ndoni	Aggah
Okwuzi	Four days interval	Fruits, vegetables, garri	Ogba/Ndoni	Okwuzi
Mmahu	Four days interval	Dryfish, crayfish, water snail	Ogba/Ndoni	Mmahu
Anya Ezi	Four days interval	Fruits, cocoyam, plantain	Abua/Odual	Abua
Nchia	Every Saturday	Garri, plantain, vegetable	Eleme	Eleme
Onne	Every Friday	Crayfish, meat, garri	Eleme	Onne
Ebubu	Every Tuesday	Stockfish, firewood, garri	Eleme	Ebubu
Mbiama	Every Tuesday	Plantain, meat, vegetable	Ahoada West	Mbiama
Akabuka	Four days interval	Yam, Vegetables, plantain	Ahoada West	Akabuka
Oboburu	Four days interval	Cassava, palm oil, vegetables	Ahoada West	Oboburu
Ogbogu	Four days interval	Firewood, Cassava, plantain	Ahoada West	Ogbogu
Erema	Four days interval	Melon, poultry, garri	Ahoada West	Erema
Obagi	Four days interval	Fruits, stockfish, vegetables	Ahoada East	Obagi

Source; Author's field work

among kings to acquire more territories since that was one way a king's prowess was measured". This also explains the reason why rural periodic markets are located in communities walled by other villages which serves as protective walls. Another respondent Emmanuel Ow'honda in Obite market reveals that "Even then, they had to go in groups and return in like manner to avoid being kidnapped". It was the penetration of the European Merchants into the interior of the region that opened up rural periodic markets into external contact. It was this external contact that increases the status, size and functions of rural periodic markets in this geographical region of Nigeria. With improvement in communication, there was the penetration of other goods into the markets beside the traditional agricultural products for which each market was noted for. Today rural periodic markets in rural Rivers State had grown to be a strong force in the rural economic space and in rural development.

5. The Spatial Spread of Periodic Markets in Rivers State.

Rivers State is geographically segmented into upland and riverine areas. The upland area is made up of fourteen local government councils with varying height between 13-45metres above sea level covering about 61% of the State and originally occupied by rainforest. The riverine area is made up of nine local government councils covering about 39% of the State affected by great tidal influence. The economic characteristics of each zone are influenced by the geography of the area. This is also reflected in the major agricultural product types in each rural periodic market. Rural periodic markets are spread across the upland and riverine areas of the state. Most periodic markets in the region show form of specialization. Periodic markets in each community or clan show the area in which it has absolute advantage over other clans due to its geography.

6. Characteristics of Rural Periodic Markets in Rivers State.

1). Area Specialization-One common characteristic of rural periodic markets in Rivers State is the allotment of space to different commodities. This allows for flexibility in circulation within the market. Buyers do not need to wander much to locate items needed. Though area specialization do not take the same form in all the markets, there is a little variation from clan to clan but invariably two common forms are noticed in all the periodic markets;

[a] All sellers of the same commodities are seen in rows

[b] All traders from a particular clan or ring are seen in rows. Thus at Ahia-Nkwo market in the Emuoha ring, it is common on each market day to see the traders from the Kalabari tribe at the left row selling smoked fish, dry prawn and chewing stick. At Mbiama periodic market, traders from Emuohua ring are usually found close to the entrance selling their merchandize; palm oil, garri, vegetables etc. while those from Bayelsa State are often seen with their products very close to the express road. They are the largest suppliers of plantain and snail to the market. One thing is clear and that is the fact that sellers from each ring or clan have one or two dominant products to trade off in the market. Besides flexibility in movement, this pattern also allows for easy bulk buying and selling. In this manner, prices are easily controlled in the periodic markets.

2). Bulk Buying and Selling-Because of area specialization in agricultural productivity as reflected in the dominant products sold at each traditional periodic market bulk buying and selling is a common feature in rural periodic markets. Prices of such commodities are cheaper in such market than in other markets. Thus a seller can come to a market with bags of cocoyam and sell them outright to another seller whose purpose in that market is to gather enough of such item and to trade them off in another market where the price is higher.

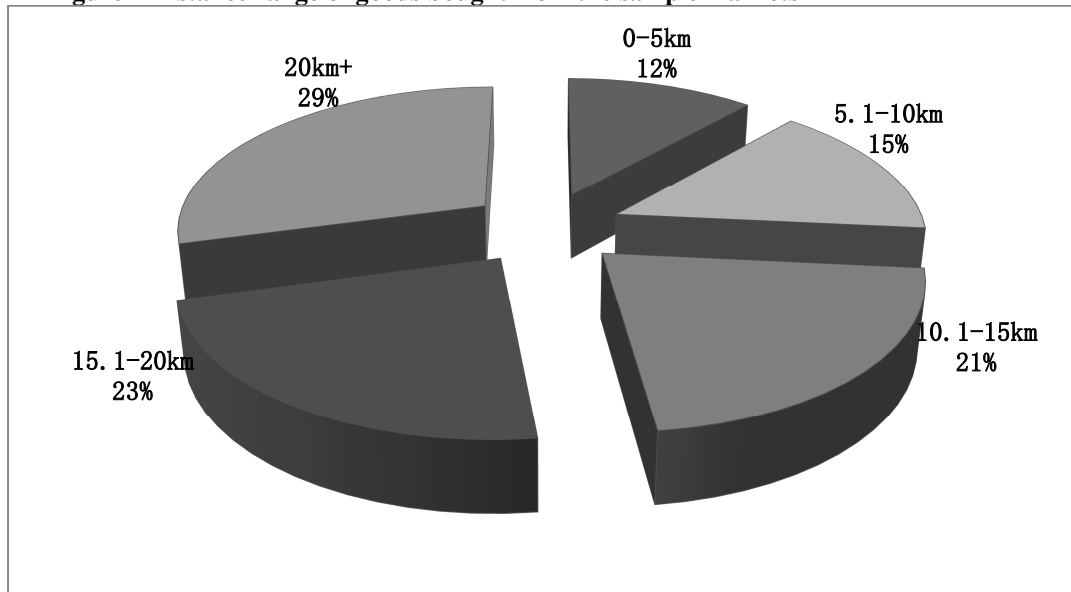
3). Miscellaneous Service-In periodic markets, there are other categories of marketers whose purpose in the market is neither to buy nor sell any of the agricultural products but to render some miscellaneous services to the buyers and sellers from the hinterland. They are among the most mobile of all the marketers and feature virtually in all the markets in the ring or clan. They may be few in number but the demand for their services is on the high side. In Bodo traditional periodic market, only two men were seen repairing umbrellas but the patronage was very high with an average of 10-25 umbrellas to be repaired by each repairer on each market day during the rainy season. In Anya-Ezi market in Abua ring, only three shoe repairers were seen working tirelessly to meet up demand.

4). Movement of goods in the periodic markets- Two types of movement are observed in the sample markets, the first is the movement of goods into the market, and the second is the movement of goods out of the market. In the first category, local farm produce or craft moves from within the clan into the market during market days. Usually a woman will carry farm products from her husband's farm into the market for sale but this is not in every case. There are some women that have taken up the status of "middle men" in the markets. These women buy directly from the farmers or other traders from other periodic markets, and take them to the market on a market day. They are the most mobile of the traders and easily noticeable. They will come to the market with their goods, trade them off quickly and buy some other local products which are taken to another area that do not have the advantage to produce such commodities for sale. Also in this group are those who move into the market from other rings with goods in which the market ring does not have the advantage to produce. For this group, their choice of market is dependent greatly on the prevailing market price of such commodity in the different rings occasioned by demand.

The second category of movement is that which leaves the periodic market on every market day. Two categories of movement are identified here. The first is that which leaves the market to the surrounding settlements. Here we have those who come to the market to buy for self consumption. For them the market is their shopping center to meet the household demand. In the second category are those who come to the market to buy in bulk and take them to areas where the demand for such goods is high for re-sale in bulk also. Also, in this category we have those who buy in wholesale and retail them in shops or on wooden tables in front of their homes in their communities. As goods enter the markets haphazardly, so is the manner in which they leave the markets. Every market shows a degree of specialization in one or some types of agricultural products. This is a determining factor in the population of each periodic market.

5) Dominant Products- Every periodic market has its dominant products which also reflect the economic geography of the people. Prices of products are cheaper in the market in which the geographical area has the advantage to produce over others but as the goods move away to other markets in another geographical area that does not have the capacity to produce such goods or where production is low, price tends to rise. In the Emuoha ring for instance Okporowo is highly noted for one of the finest quality in garri production and palm oil while Ubimini is noted for fine quality garri and vegetables. Goods leaving any periodic market do not go to any particular destination(see figure 1). The distance covered by the goods is dependent on the demand for such products. The distance covered also determines the price at which the product shall be sold at its destination point.

Figure 1 Distance range of goods bought from the sample markets



7. The Role of Rural Periodic Markets in Rivers State.

7.1 Economic Role: From the account of one the respondents at Kono Boue market, Lebari Clliford, a 65 year old traditional herbalist, “economic factor was the primary factor that gave birth to traditional periodic markets in this region”. According to him since each clan produces those items or products in which it has absolute advantage over others, there became the need for integration among the various clans and communities to make possible the distribution of goods. For instance, in Ebubu community market, in Eleme ring, the dominant products are garri, firewood and stockfish. Thus on a market day, the villagers would carry these products to the market in exchange for those commodities in which the village do not have the capacity to produce. Exchange before the penetration of capitalist economy was by “barter”. Another respondent, James Amos from Bukuma, a Kalabari community, a regular supplier of fruits to the markets in the Emuoha ring confirmed this; Bukuma community is a “basket house” for fruits. Predominant among them are mango and oranges. Thus on every market day, the people would carry these products to the markets in other rings for exchange with other products.

Table 2 Commodity structure of sample markets in the State

Name of Market	Number of Sellers interviewed	Percentage of local goods from ring	Percentage of local goods from outside the rings	Percentage of manufactured goods in the market	Total(%)
Bodo	150	40.30	30.70	29.0	100
Mbiama	150	47.0	33.50	19.50	100
Ahia Nkwo	150	52.0	30.30	17.70	100
Ebubu	150	54.7	33.0	12.3	100
Kono Boue	150	45.0	38.9	16.1	100
Elele	150	55.5	30.5	14.0	100
Eketa	150	45.0	41.1	13.9	100
Kalasanji	150	48.39	38.1	13.51	100
Agaja	150	53.00	40.70	6.3	100
Mgbede	150	50.0	30.0	20.0	100
Anya Ezi	150	47.9	33.10	19.0	100
Obite	150	40.0	38.2	21.8	100
Elibrada	150	43.5	37.5	19.0	100
Ngo	150	51.7	32.3	16.0	100
Akabuka	150	49.0	36.9	14.1	100

Source: Author’s field work.

The barter system is still in practice to this day in some markets but on relatively small scale and among traders that have built up a cordial relationship over a period of time. The economic functions of these traditional periodic markets are numerous. First, it functions as a collection center for diverse specialized agricultural products from different communities and distributes the products among two categories of marketers; those from within the ring and those from outside the ring. Secondly, it ensures steady supply of agricultural and other products to the market. The periodicity of the markets acts as a check to ensure that the markets are not over flooded with goods. The seller comes to the market with the quantity he knows he will be able to sell. The buyer do not buy more than necessary (especially those who buy for consumption) taking into account that the rural areas lack adequate storage facilities. The consumer is confident of the fact that he can refill his stock in few days time.

Table 3 Increase in the number of stalls in the sample markets between 1990-2014

Name of Market	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2014
Bodo	40	78	95	121	161	263
Mbiamama	56	83	109	138	168	310
Ahia Nkwo	45	70	98	132	178	280
Ebubu	38	54	87	135	153	260
Kono Boue	43	67	94	132	167	280
Elele	50	65	93	121	187	296
Eketa	41	62	80	98	189	250
Kalasanji	51	74	97	108	150	253
Agaja	43	68	90	121	167	245
Mgbede	55	78	98	132	170	285
Anya Ezi	47	73	98	128	164	274
Obite	43	67	85	129	173	269
Elibrada	32	57	80	111	134	187
Ngo	35	69	83	124	156	216
Akabuka	38	62	80	120	146	189

Source: Author's field work

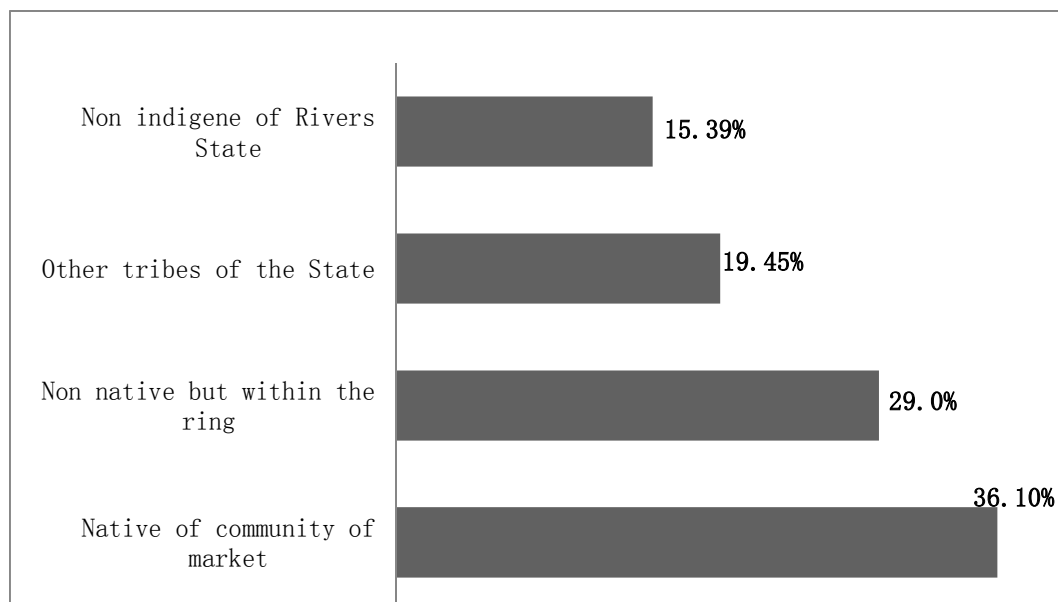
This singular function helps in maintaining stability in both price and supply. Over the years, these periodic markets had metamorphosed from a mere collection and distribution centres for local agricultural products within and between rings or clans to a collection and distribution centres for goods also from other regions of the State and country including goods from overseas(see table 2). With the improvement in communication today rural periodic markets have cut across regional boundary (see figure 2). This improvement has allowed the introduction of urban elements into rural settings and creation of more administrative units in the rural areas thus opening up more marketing opportunities in each clan and increasing the economic prowess of rural periodic markets. This improvement in communication had also contributed to the spatial expansion of these markets(see table 3). This expansion is reflected in the rise in the number market stalls recorded in the sample markets between1990-2014.

Markets which are close to the boundary with other States enjoy more economic advantages. Such markets always boast of high population and more varieties in terms of products available in the market. Market such as the Ubimini periodic market is popularly referred to as a "boundary market" because of its closeness to Imo State. That explains the reason for the high attendance by the Igbo traders who supply to the market such items as clothes, cosmetics and provision. In the Mbiamama periodic market which shares boundary with Bayelsa State, it is common to see such items as banana, plantain and snails in large supply by traders from Bayelsa State. For such bulky goods as canoe, firewood, plywood etc. which cannot be easily carried to daily markets, periodic markets offer such traders easy access to dispose of their commodities. In the riverine communities, such items are traded off at the waterfront. In each periodic market day it is common to see buyers at the waterfront waiting for the sellers to arrive so that transaction could begin immediately.

7.2 Social Function- Market rings reflect the different ancestral lineage in the region. Each periodic market ring has its primary marketers; those that constitutes that ring, for instance in the upland Emuoha ring are the following units; Okporowo, Rumuoro, Oduoha, Ahia, Rumuada,Rumuokani with eleven notable periodic markets that spread across the ring. Periodic markets therefore afford the units the opportunity to interact in a

wider and higher scope. Information of common interest is easily passed around in the periodic market days. Such frequent interaction promotes the spirit of oneness and unity and help to strengthen family lineage. Women who marry outside their ancestral community are given the opportunity during periodic market days to meet their kinsmen and satisfy their curiosity about the welfare of their relatives back home. Letters and other items could be sent across in such market days to a relative or loved one. Owen Emenike another of our respondent at Elibrada market claimed that such periodic market days also offers the singles the opportunity to interact. Some of these interactions had resulted into marriages in the past. Besides marriage, new friendship is made during market days while old ones are strengthened. It also presents the opportunity for current community gossip. Periodic markets promote high degree of integration among traders from diverse ethnic groups that patronize the market. For instance in the market at Elele, it is common to hear most of their indigenous traders speaking Igbo language. This is as a result of the age long interaction between the Ikwerres and the Igbos through periodic markets. Such interaction in language makes business transaction easier and also promotes positive customer-trader relationship. Today oral history has it that the “Owoma” masquerade that has become part of the Kalabari tradition in the riverine area of the State was borrowed from the Ikwerre ethnic group. Madam Chinda Cyprian of Rumuji community, one of our respondents at Mgbede market maintained that the age long interaction through periodic markets between the Ikwerres and Kalabaris had also resulted into the infiltration of Kalabari culture into Ikwerre land. For instance, she maintained that the Kalabaris celebrate the dead traditionally, the Ikwerres today have adopted this culture. Also some items in the Ikwerre periodic markets are now called by “Kalabari names”.

Figure 2 Ethnic compositions of sellers at the sample markets



8. The Contribution of Periodic Markets in Rural Development in Rivers State.

The contribution of rural periodic market in rural development can be best appreciated within the context of our understanding of the term “rural development”. In a broader context rural development has to do with the transformation of the nation’s mode of production so as to bring qualitative changes in the living conditions of the rural people (DEFFRI,1987).

This by interpretation means it could basically entail bringing forth a qualitative change or up-liftment in the living standard of the people brought about through integrated approach(United Nation,1971). The contribution of rural periodic market to rural development can therefore be better understood within the context of these definitions. We can look at this contribution from two perspectives;

1. Economic Perspective-Periodic markets in this geographical area perform two functions; (a) Provide platform for the export of agricultural products and services to points outside the rings. (b) Enable rural people within a ring to meet their needs or access to those goods that cannot be produced within their own ring. With improvement in communication network there has been an astronomical increase in their performance in both functions resulting into increasing demands for goods sold at the markets.

The ring system, the commodity specialization, the character and the mode of operation of rural periodic markets has provided ready market for products from the hinter land surrounding any market. In this way, the rural farmer does not have to wait for long to dispose of his products or search for buyers from one point to another or bother much about storage facilities which are non existence in the rural areas. The influx of people into the market on each market day gives the farmer the advantage of quick sale of his products. In this way most farmers have been able to outgrow the subsistence mode of production. In order to meet up demand they have been able to increase their productive capacity. This has brought forth a significant improvement in household income and the opportunity to meet more basic household needs.

2. Development Perspective- Periodic market centres serve as central places to the hinterland as well as providing services for the population in the surrounding villages. The local government headquarters were established to allow for the cluster of services, facilities and infrastructure to serve disperse rural population. This it is believed will stimulate development in the surrounding hinterland but the “nakedness” in terms of social and economic infrastructure in these centres had reduced the local government headquarters to mere administrative units.

The influx of people, goods and services into the periodic markets has provided for the rural people access to variety of services and goods needed to meet their need for shelters, food and clothing. Services and goods which cannot be found in the surrounding villages are found in periodic markets. The centrality of the markets in each ring ensures that it is accessed by a large population within the ring. Today because of the rapidly increasing population which periodic markets continue to attract, the goods and services they offer, some periodic market centres have attracted some public facilities thus increasing their status. The provision of roads linking some periodic market centres with the hinterland has increased the intensity of farming activities on the part of the rural farmer occasioned by the high demand for his product each market day. The increasing status of these periodic markets have brought into the surrounding rural villages increasing opportunities for development and growth as well progressive adjustment in well-being. In this way the rural dweller is able to strike a balance between opportunities and household or community needs.

It can be conclusively stated that as the periodic markets in the State continue to increase in status and functions, their propulsive qualities have also continued to radiate outward into the surrounding hinterland within the individual rings.



Figure 3 The Anya Nkwo periodic market in the Emuohua clan. Infrastructural development programmes in the rural areas should include an upgrading of these facilities to give to the marketers better experiences during the rainy season.

9. Developing Rural Periodic Market Centres as Growth Nodes in Rivers State.

The centrality of periodic markets, their functions and the population they serve had qualified them as potential points for location of public infrastructure. The location of public facilities in the local government headquarters had not produced the expected benefits in terms of service delivery. One of the reasons is that the choice of location of some of these local government headquarters was politically influenced. Thus most local government

headquarters are not centrally located and cannot be easily accessed by the population in the hinterland. The situation is compounded by the issue of poor transportation network in rural Rivers State which has its effect on travel time and cost. We may agree with some spatial development scholars that “development cannot appear everywhere and all at once but can appear in poles or nodes and spread along diverse channels with varying terminal effects to the surrounding areas”(Perroux,1955). Phased infrastructural development of selected first order periodic market centers will help create the basis for more economic activities to locate in such centres. There are about twenty of such centres in the State with an average market population of 4000 and above recorded each market day (see table 4).

Development of periodic market centers will help to reduce the population pressure on Port Harcourt the only primate city in the State. There is no denying the fact that the process of urbanization in the state had resulted into skewed development with almost all demographic and economic activities occurring just in Port Harcourt. This has resulted into several socio-economic problems which has given successive government in the State sleepless night. Thus development of some periodic market centers will play a positive role in the surrounding hinterland. The phased development of infrastructure which is recommended as a first step may be a long term plan but can be achieved within the context of good governance. The life span of the plan should not be terminated by change in government which is one of the challenges to rural development in the country(Onurah,1986; Onibokun,1987). The next phase should be the location of carefully planned economic activities, industrial estate and scenic parks. Consideration should be given to industries that will utilize the resources in which the people in that ring have absolute advantage over others. This step will encourage the movement of more population to such centres. It will also promote opportunities for highly skilled and semi-skilled labour within each ring.

Table.4 1st Order Periodic Market Centres Based on average Market Population size of 4000 and above(Potential growth nodes)

S/No	Name of Market Centre	Population size of market(Average recorded on each market day)
1	Bodo	6500
2	Ngo	4210
3	Rumuiji	5300
4	Elele Alimini	7200
5	Ubimini	9100
6	Kaa	7400
7	Obite	6300
8	Kalasanji	5100
9	Mbiama	10,800
10	Ebubu	4600
11	Obagi	6000
12	Big Elele	11500
13	K-Dere	6600
14	B-Dere	6200
15	Ataba	5380
16	Ibaa	6300
17	Ozuzu	4530
18	Akabuka	5800
19	Onne	8060
20	Kono Boue	4100

Source: Author’s field work

To retain the growth, an aggressive development of housing and other relevant local infrastructure needed to sustain the population must be pursued. This careful development will eventually attract other services as resort services, banking, telecommunication, education etc. to such centres. While we transform these periodic market centres into growth points, we must ensure that there is sustainable use of their resources; development should not cause irreparable damage to the environment of the rural people. Secondly, the development should permit community participation in needs assessment, plan initiation and implementation. This must be effectively done without destroying their social structures or reduce the quality of life of the rural people. The benefit of this development will on the long run trickle down to the surrounding hinterland within the market rings.

10. Conclusion/ Recommendation

Port Harcourt the capital of Rivers State had remained as the only primate city in the State since its creation in 1967. Successive government in the State had never ceased to show their bias in the distribution of social and economic infrastructure in favour of the city at the expense of the hinterland. The colossal concentration of economic and social infrastructure in the city has made it a “Heaven” in the eyes of the rural dwellers. This has helped to strengthen the “push factor” in rural Rivers State. The city has grown to a point today that the word “Horror” could be used to describe the attendant problems associated with it. Giving special and specific attention to the development of the hinterland offers the best option out of this “Horror”. Every successive government had acknowledged the need to develop the rural areas of the State as a way of reducing the “push factor” in the rural areas but their developmental policies had never encouraged rural development. Development of rural periodic market centres(communities) because of their centrality, functions and the population it serves could be an effective strategy to develop rural Rivers State and reduce the “push factor”. As a first step, there should be a careful plan for service provision and provision of resources to meet perceived needs in these periodic market centres. To achieve this effectively we must begin with needs assessment, careful plan design or planning and implementation of the needed programmes. To record the expected result there must be an active participation of the rural dwellers in the three steps needed. It is only when the people are involved in the development processes that bothers on their welfare that such programme can receive their total support which is needed for such programme to succeed. The current rural development practice in the State where rural development programmes are initiated for the rural people by their urban elites who are alien to the frustration of the rural people should be discarded. This practice had been responsible to a large extent to the failure of most rural development programmes as such programmes upon implementation were discovered to be miles away from the needs of the people. The infrastructural development and service provision process should also include an upgrading of the existing make shift market stalls in the 1st order market centres proposed for development. This will give a better experience to the traders during the rainy season.

Development of these periodic market centres should not only be limited to service delivery which is the current rural development strategy in the State and country but should be extended to include more comprehensive approach. Such comprehensive approach should include among others the introduction of programmes that will help the people to cash on existing motivations as well as promoting positive community relationship. There must be a social feasibility study to understand the relationship within the people who are the target of the development programme. There must be a realization that a community is made up of sub parts which functions together to achieve common goals. Relationship within a community is very essential to the success of any development programme targeted at such community. The relationship such community share with their neighbours is also very important. A positive relationship will be a plus while a competitive or conflicting relationship can be an obstacle to any rural development programme. Thus programmes targeted at developing the rural periodic market centres should also include those that will promote healthy relationship within a community, and between the community and their neighbours. In rural Rivers State, inter-intra communal conflict, conflict arising from political power play, traditional rulership squabbles, boundary disputes etc. has been a threat to rural development.

The current rural development practice in the country is that once a project takes off and is successfully implemented, the responsibility of rural development is achieved. A further step should be taken here in the development of rural periodic market centres. The issue of follow-up after project implementation should be employed. This is necessary to identify possible social obstacle to the success of the programme. Another area in which further research may be necessary is on the challenges of developing secondary cities in Rivers State.

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