

LEAD DEBATE ON THE NATIONAL INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY BILL, 2017

Senator Stella Oduah (*Anambra South*)

Mr President, distinguished Senators, it gives me satisfaction and joy to lead the debates on the general principles of this very important Bill which seeks to provide for the establishment of the Integrated Rural Development Agency Bill 2017.

The Bill was read for the first time in this Chamber on the Thursday 23rd June 2016.

Mr President, highly respected Colleagues Rural integrated development involves a coordinated program that requires integrating the developmental challenges that rural people face to help improve their living conditions in a sustainable manner so as to touch every aspect of their lives. A rural village in Africa faces interrelated problems that affect all aspect of their lives. The needs for clean water, electricity, good health care, good roads etc. are uniformly visible in our rural communities.

The very essence of this important bill is the extension of the change culture of government into rural area so as to make our rural dwellers have a feel of governance.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues the major significant indices for measuring the level of socio-economic growth and success of any nation lies in the level of growth at the rural areas and the Agency which this Bill seeks to establish Mr. President, will help our nation meet the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable human development rights among the rural communities in line with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

The major objectives of this Bill is to give our rural areas a boost in terms of infrastructural development, as well as the improvement of their living standard, these will be achieved through the establishment of the Agency with the specific function of fostering community environmental and ecological sustainability.

Over two thirds of Nigeria's population resides in rural areas. Increasingly, poverty in the country is wearing a rural face. From 28.3 % in 1980, poverty among the rural population grew to 51.4 % in 1985, has since risen to 69.8 % in 1996. Poverty tends to affect men and women differently. Women are generally

less educated, more vulnerable, deprived and powerless than their male counterparts.

Poor people experience insecurity and vulnerability (drought, desertification, flooding, deforestation, diseases, volatile commodity markets etc.); lack of empowerment to influence public policies according to their priorities; and lack of opportunities for income generation and benefits from markets. Access to education, safe water supply, sanitation, health, modern energy, telecommunications and roads are important in reducing vulnerability and increasing prosperity.

Critical infrastructure services, like water, energy and telecoms come at relatively high costs in rural communities. While scale, density, distance and purchasing power of rural communities tend to increase investment costs, inappropriate government policies can also drive the prices for these commodities up in rural areas. Essential expenditures on water and energy often represent a large proportion of the disposal incomes of rural households. While some of these costs are monetized, others are informal and come in form of time and drudgery spent by mostly women and children in collecting water and gathering wood.

In a survey conducted by UNICEF in Nigeria, water supply and energy services topped the list of the most pressing needs of rural households. In the survey, 77% of households rated access to adequate and safe water as the most critical element in escaping poverty. Access to electricity came second at 53%.

The Agency which this Bill seeks to establish will evolve and implement policies and programmes in the areas of self-sufficiency in food and fibre, enhancement of Community productive activities, income generation, employment opportunities, reduction of Community-urban migration, poverty eradication and ultimately mainstreaming the Community dwellers into national development and as well

(a) Collaborate with Federal Government Ministries and Agencies, International Development Partners, State Governments, Local Governments and Local Communities, private and public sector organizations/institutions, enterprises and individuals for the purpose of harnessing and coordinating resources for implementation of Community development programmes and projects.

- (b) Mobilize and empower the Community population to create wealth through increased agricultural, industrial and other productive activities;
- (c) Promote the expansion of the productive base of the Community economy through the creation and expansion of non-agricultural enterprises;
- (d) Provide Community support services needed to bring about increased production of goods and services and provide access to extension services, inputs, credit and marketing services, and to raise Community productivity in general.
- (e) Establish an integrated network of cottage and small scale industries, and promote the acquisition of vocational and trade skills, arts and crafts;
- (f) Improve the human resource and technological capacity of Community communities through education, training, extension and technical support services that facilitate the adoption of relevant technology by Community producers;
- (g) develop the Community areas and raise the quality of life in Community communities through the provision of Community feeder roads, potable water, sanitation, regular power supply, good health facilities and other socio-economic facilities;
- (h) Create a network of Community marketing and distribution infrastructure to enhance profitable exchange of products between markets;
- (i) Encourage activities aimed at conserving Community environment, with a view to enhancing the preservation of life forms and conservation of natural resources as the key to sustainable development.
- (j) Serve as the vehicle by which Government promotes its policies and programmes for implementation of the integrated Community development;
- (k) Harmonize activities of the various poverty alleviation institutions in the Country with a view to ensuring a more cost-effective and coordinated implementation of integrated Community development and poverty alleviation programmes of Community areas in areas in particular and the Country at large;

(l) Initiate and execute programmes aimed at harnessing and integrating the capacities and potentials of special target groups (disabled, women, and youth) into economic industry of the community;

Mr. President distinguished Senators, there is need for coordination of major policies for the development of our communities this is what this Bill seeks to achieve .The promotion of this Bill is my humble contribution to correct these problems that has been hindering the overall development of our rural communities in Nigeria .

Mr. President, my distinguished Colleagues, there is no better time than now to leave a legacy for Nigerians by establishing this Agency to address the problem inhibiting rural development in Nigeria

The importance of this Bill cannot be over emphasized. It is at the root of the success of our journey towards greatness as a nation and it deserves the full support of all Senators.

In line with our Order 77(3) the compendium of the estimated financial implication of the establishment of this Agency is attached.

I urge you all therefore to ensure that it is speedily passed as an Act of the National Assembly in order to further strengthen the economic reforms package of this government as it relates to the Sustainable Development Goal to better the life of the rural dwellers

Thank you for your attention.

**COMPENDIUM ON NATIONAL INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY IN THE FIRST TWELVE MONTHS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING
COMMENCEMENT**

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1. Projected Recurrent Expenditure (Salaries and allowances of personnel)	400,000,000.00
2. Projected Recurrent Expenditure (Maintenance of vehicles, management costs of offices and Other contingency)	60,000,000.00
3. Estimated Capital Expenditure (Office accommodation, furniture, etc)	290,000,000.00
Estimated Capital Expenditure (Purchase of vehicles)	100,000,000.00
Total Projected/Estimated Costs for First Year of Commencement of the Agency	N850,000,000.00

SURMISES

The forgoing compilation proffers a fair approximation of the financial implications for the establishment of the Agency in the first year immediately following commencement.

To all intents and purposes, the financial outlay estimated and projected for the Agency is a modest one. Appropriate for the effective discharge and performance of the duties contemplated in the Bill.