

POSITION PAPER: THE RURAL DIMENSION

Nigeria: Drivers of Change

Component Three – Output 11

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Abbreviations

ADP	Agricultural Development Project
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CPR	Common Property (or Pool) Resource
DFID	(United Kingdom) Department For International Development
DVD	Digital Video Disc
FEPA	Federal Environmental Protection Agency
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
FII	<i>Fadama II</i>
FMARD	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
FME	Federal Ministry of Environment
FMWR	Federal Ministry of Water Resources
FUA	Fadama Users Association
GoN	Government of Nigeria
IUCN	World Conservation Union
JEWEL	Jigawa Enhancement of Wetlands Livelihoods Project
LDC	Less-Developed Country
LG	Local Government
LGA	Local Government Authority
MACBAN	Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLPD	National Livestock Project Division
PA	Protected Area
PCU	Project Coordinating Unit
RBDA	River Basin Development Authority
SEPA	State Environmental Protection Agency
SG	State Government
SMARD	State Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's (Education) Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCD	Video CD
WB	World Bank
WIA	Weakly Integrated Area
WUA	Water Users Association

1. Introduction

As part of the DFID-Nigeria ‘Drivers of change’ Initiative, the consultant has been requested to ‘provide in-depth analysis to inform the Department for International Development (DFID) Nigeria’s Drivers of Change initiative on the role of the rural dimension as a barrier to change or driver of change in Nigeria’. Component Three is expected build on the work undertaken in Component One and ‘will provide detailed, Nigeria specific information about each driver using a standardized methodological approach. Analysis of each individual driver will form the basis for an analysis of the inter-relationship between each driver resulting in a better understanding of how different processes and forces within Nigeria’s political economy can influence political, economic and social change’.

IFAD (2001) argues that poverty will continue to be located in rural areas until at least 2025 and in the light of the current situation in Africa, this may be an optimistic projection. Civil insecurity and the knock-on effects of a series of climatic discontinuities have culminated in record levels of food insecurity, compounded by international indifference in the light of other political priorities. Nigeria should be better placed than most African countries to defeat these trends given its continuing high level of income from oil. Oil constituted 96.4% of exports during the 1990s and revenue from oil was ₦1,111.1 billion in 2000. However, GNP per capita in 1999 was US\$300, lower than during the first oil price boom and more than two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty line (equivalent to roughly one US dollar per day) compared to 46% in 1985¹. Rural poverty remains, if anything, a greater challenge in Nigeria. This report focuses on identifying the ‘Drivers of Change’ which both determine the processes creating the current situation in rural areas and identifies those which may lead to pro-poor change.

2. Overview and Justification

2.1 Scope

The rural dimension can be conceptualised in a number of ways, each providing different insights into its character. Rurality has traditionally been defined by geography, the dispersal of settlements and populations. But in the light of technological and economic changes this distinction is less and less valid. Table 1 sets out some alternative ways of conceptualising the rural dimension;

Table 1. Competing conceptualisations of the rural dimension

Axis	Comment
Environmental	Traditional town/country division but less and less useful with habitat conversion and improved communications
Centre-periphery	Remoteness, either geographical or functional, from loci of socio-economic power. Often associated with civic insecurity.
Degree of market integration	Often connected with remoteness but reflecting also ethnicity, infrastructure and environment
Communications and infrastructure access	Increasingly important as income generation becomes more information-based

It is increasingly perceived that rural areas are excluded from economic growth in much of Africa which has led to growing calls for social protection. Farrington and Gill² have explored the revalidation of agriculture and other rural activities as an engine of growth. They propose that it is more helpful to conceptualise areas traditionally-defined as rural rather as ‘Weakly Integrated Areas’ (WIAs), where this refers to integration with the market. Such areas are likely to be remote, to encompass a majority of poor households, to be more likely to include ethnic minorities and to be ecologically fragile. Nigeria is probably exceptional in African terms because of the very large number of impoverished peri-urban households, but otherwise these features can be said to accurately characterise the ‘rural dimension’. Farrington and Gill in their Box 4 set out eight

¹ Figures taken from as Marchat et al (2002:1).

² Farrington and Gill (2002)

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‘Ways of combining production and social protection objectives’ and the extent to which these can or likely to be applicable in Nigeria is considered in Table 8.

Another way of analysing the rural dimension is by the type of capital on which they draw. Table 2 shows key elements of the rural dimension categorised by both types of activity and by capital (using the categories of the sustainable livelihoods model);

Table 2. Parameters of the rural dimension

Activity Categories	Capital types
Production: Farm produce, livestock	Social: social structure, trust, networks. Rural social structure, remains more intact, both in terms of households and authority structure Rural areas provide a flexible labour resource for enterprises
Collection: fish, bushmeat, firewood, timber and other wild resources	Human: educational attainments, skills, labour, gender, ethnicity
Extraction: urban water supply, mining, quarrying and oil production	Natural (Environmental): land, water, flora and fauna, crop and livestock varieties
Service provision: markets, trade networks, skilled labour (teachers, health workers etc.)	Financial: farmers probably invest more heavily in production than almost any other sector of the economy; some flow of remittances from town and other countries to rural households Political: formal and informal power relations, including intra-household relations, traditional and modern authorities, electoral voting blocs Physical: roads, bridges, market stalls, telecommunications etc

A table like this also says much about the relations between town and country. Nigeria has always had a very pluralistic rural economy as a consequence of the system of traditional city-states and the flow of processed goods from country to town is widely recorded in pre-colonial sources. Curiously, the high volume of urban demand for agricultural produce and the flow of cheap manufactured goods into Nigeria has if anything reduced the necessity to diversify livelihoods. Blacksmiths, potters, basket-weavers and cloth-dyers find a more limited market for their products in towns due to competition from manufactured equivalents, but any farmer can find a ready market for his or her produce. This is probably exceptional in the African context, where an inability to subsist purely from agriculture due to low international prices³ has impelled rural diversification in many countries. There is little doubt, however, that rural diversification is the key to improved living standards, and this will depend on the upgrading of rural goods and services, especially those directed towards to urban consumers. Rice produced within Nigeria, although preferred by consumers for its taste, is often full of stones and slightly fermented due to parboiling, which inevitably creates a market for the white rice imported from SE Asia⁴. If mechanical destoning were widely available and the processing were upgraded, it is unlikely that imported rice would be competitive in most Nigerian markets.

The division between urban and rural areas is not the division between rich and poor, as most urban centres in Nigeria are characterised by a very high percentage of poor households and moreover, these households are characterised by an absence of safety-nets characteristic of rural communities, such as higher levels of social capital, agricultural production and gathered produce. Nonetheless, the cities *are* where the rich live and the process of asset-stripping rural environments (firewood, water etc.) begins in the cities and is often driven by the demands of the urban poor. Table 3 tries to characterise the overall flow of goods and services between town and country;

³ In Mali and neighbouring countries, a significant dependence on cotton developed in the 1980s and 1990s. The collapse of world cotton prices due to US subsidies has left many rural populations without a viable cash crop and they are diversifying into livestock, migrant labour and a wide variety of other activities. Rural production in Nigeria has never been so monolithic and it is thus less vulnerable to this type of external shock.

⁴ For a detailed description of rice production in Nigeria, see Longtau (2003)

Table 3. Goods and services flowing between urban and rural sites

TOWN		COUNTRY
Manufactured goods	→	
Skilled labour	→	
Services	→	
Infrastructure	→	
Cash, remittances	→	
	←	Unskilled labour
	←	Water
	←	Food and other produce
	←	Crafts
	←	Raw materials, minerals etc.

When interpreting this table it needs to be remembered that a growing number of individuals and households move regularly between town and country, to both assure food supplies and simultaneously take part in urban events. In the same vein, not all cash and remittances flow from towns; they may be sent from outside Nigeria or from another location in rural Nigeria or even in neighbouring countries, such as Cameroun and Benin⁵.

Another aspect of the rural dimension, less easily quantifiable, but very important in the Nigerian context, is that it is a locus of identity. The megacities now characteristic of Nigeria are recent constructs; almost all their inhabitants are aware of their rural roots although sometimes they give these a negative characterisation. Villages are where people speak the language ‘properly’ and know ‘the customs’, but where people are ‘illiterates’ and unsophisticated. It is not uncommon for urban families to send their children to their village for some years to ensure they can command the language and have a knowledge of farming in case urban sources of income fall apart. Interestingly, for the second and third generation of urbanites this identification with the rural base is waning; many town families speak English or Hausa among themselves and assume an increasingly intercultural identity; the rise of powerful church movements and other integrating factors distinctive to the urban environment are undoubtedly a response to this loss of traditional identities. This is also changing the nature of trade with rural areas. Whereas previously households in towns retained ties to rural farm production and weekend buses were piled high with staples being brought back to supply urban tables, these links are increasingly broken and rural produce is supplied on a strictly commercial basis.

2.2 Justification for inclusion of the rural dimension

Despite its vast cities, Nigeria remains a predominantly rural country, with perhaps 60-70% of the population still living in the countryside and 40% of GDP coming from ‘agriculture’, broadly defined (i.e. including livestock but excluding forestry and fisheries). Moreover, the poor are predominantly in rural areas where poverty remains chronic and persistent, especially as many of the facilities established in the 1980s, such as schools, clinics and water-sources, are no longer functioning. Indeed, there is evidence that the recession characteristic of the second half of the 1990s has actually driven many weakly established urban groups to reclaim their landholdings for at least part of the year. Similarly, pressure on land, especially near towns, has increased the incidence of land sales overall, although this is still fairly rare in remoter areas. Table 4 shows key agricultural statistics for Nigeria indicative of change 1961-2001 compared with the rest of West Africa;

⁵ Weiss (1998) documents the flow of Nigerian traders in the southeast to Cameroun, some of whom move back and forth and some who settle and send remittances back to their Nigerian extended family.

Table 4. Selected agricultural statistics for Nigeria 1961-2001

1961-2000	Nigeria	West Africa
	percent per year	
Agricultural GDP Growth Rates	1.45	2.27
Share of Agricultural GDP in Total GDP	-1.60	-0.97
Gross Domestic Product	3.11	3.28
GDP per Capita	0.21	0.47
Share of Agricultural Labour in Total Labour	-2.17	-1.09
Value of Agricultural Production	3.03	2.72
Value of Crop Production	2.98	2.70
Value of Livestock Production	3.25	2.75
Land Productivity	2.42	2.35

Source: IFPRI (2002)

It is very noticeable that agricultural GDP is growing more slowly in Nigeria than in neighbouring countries, but that the value of agricultural production is higher. This illustrates the falling investment in agriculture, combining with growing urban populations that require to be fed and thus rising prices for agricultural produce. Nigeria's cities survive on a combination of cheap imports and a drip-feed of resources from rural areas. Farm produce, fish, livestock, bushmeat, firewood and a host of other smaller products flow from the countryside to the town. Despite this, investment in rural areas by Federal and State governments is now at an all-time low, while extractive activities, such as urban water supply, mining, quarrying and oil production take from the countryside without any corresponding return. Towns are the source of cheap manufactured goods in rural areas, many of which are imported. Towns are also the main source of transport and trade services; few truck-owners are based in remote areas. In addition, towns supply what may be termed social services; teachers and health workers are trained in urban centres.

Rural areas of Nigeria also play an important but unquantified role in the regional economy. In the pre-oil era, Nigeria was a well-documented producer of many agricultural products intended for export, notably groundnuts⁶, cotton, palm-oil, rubber, cashew, cocoa and others. As oil took hold, these outgrowing and processing industries largely collapsed, leaving interestingly, only tobacco. However, declining access to oil money in the 1990s and the improved road system have created a revitalised crop system in rural areas. In the south, some of the former tree crops are being renewed, notably oil-palm cashew and rubber, and 'new' species, such as citrus, pineapples and mangoes are increasing in importance⁷. These are bought in rural areas by wholesalers who usually take them across the borders to Francophone countries where they can be exchanged for Cfa and thence hard currency. In the north, cotton is undergoing something of a revival together with sesame. But the north is also producing large amounts of surplus staples, sorghum, beans and millet which are clandestinely exported to Sahelian countries and which facilitate the counter-trade in livestock. For many rural producers, the distinction between cash and staple crops no longer exists,

⁶ Groundnuts are a particularly striking example. Hogendorn (1978) documented the rise of the groundnut industry, symbolised by the groundnut pyramids of Kano. These continue to adorn tourist maps of Nigeria despite having disappeared in the early 1980s. This is not to say that groundnuts are not cultivated; indeed they are an important food and oil-crop in many semi-arid areas but are nearly all locally consumed. Cocoa in the south had a comparable role in some ways, but local consumption has only ever been at a very low level, so any revival must be driven by international demand (see Berry 1975).

⁷ The following table, extracted from IFPRI (2002) shows this 'official' list of commodities. The drylands cereals and pulses are conspicuous by their absence as is sesame, which is undoubtedly a comment on methods of collecting statistics rather than a true reflection of the state of agricultural commodity exports;

% Total Agricultural Exports 1997-1999	
Commodities	%
Cocoa Beans	46.5
Natural Dry Rubber	22.1
Cotton Lint	9.8
Palm Kernel and Oil	6.4
Cashew Nuts	3.8
Sub-total	88.6

Source: IFPRI (2002)

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following both urban demand within Nigeria and trade with neighbouring countries. The continuing condemnation of this cross-border trade by the Federal Government suggests its persistence and it is difficult to see why it should not be encouraged.

The Government of Nigeria, however, has a long history of trying to use import and export controls to manage the economy. In the oil-boom years, import bans on champagne and lace were supposed to control the excesses of the rich, to little effect. Bans on the import of cereal staples such as rice and wheat were in place for a long time, and were only lifted under pressure from the WTO. Smuggling is so rife, however, that these prohibitions had little impact, whereas the reverse, the flooding of markets with cheap rice from Việt Nam, had a strong negative impact on rice producers. Most recently, the bans on a few items, including fruit juice and toothpicks, seem to be hardly more than symbolic.

3. The rural dimension within the broader political economy

Governance in Nigeria has always been the preserve of urban elites, both because for so many years since Independence government has been dominated by the military or ex-military personnel, and because through much of the north there is a strong historical continuity between the rulers of the highly stratified Islamic city-states and the present ruling class. As a consequence, revenue allocation and infrastructure provision have always been marked by strong inequities, and a general tendency to simply ignore the wishes of rural communities. In periods of democracy, political parties have tended to exert power in rural areas by threatening to withdraw infrastructure projects.

Nonetheless, the rise of local governments has increased the profile of rural areas and has honed local accountability, if only because politicians are accessible to their kin and ethnic group members after election. They must buy off local interest groups with infrastructure projects or accommodating by-laws. This has not always had a positive impact on common resources such as pasture, forest and rivers. In recent years, Local Government chairmen have declared grazing and forest reserves open for agriculture and have passed highly discriminatory ordinances against migrant herders and fishermen. Similarly, they have ignored the provision of services to groups who will not vote for them on grounds of ethnicity or religion.

At the State and Federal level, however, the rural vote is becoming increasingly less important as more and more Nigerians move to cities. Rural votes are perceived as more easily open to rigging and the rural electorate more likely to vote on the basis of local affinity rather than allegiance to larger issues. Powerful rural leaders can deliver whole electoral districts in a way that is impossible in the inchoate situation of the towns. But voting is only a small part of the ways things are done in Nigeria. Typically, rural populations place more trust in trying to situate members of their ethnic group or clan in influential positions in the bureaucracy. The rise of home-town or community development associations are key instruments in this process. The almanac, a wall-calendar with carefully-placed photographs of prominent members of an ethnic, religious or clan association, intentionally draws together rural and urban residents and is intended to put pressure on those most influential to promote the flow of resources to the rural community. Anecdotally, creating such symbols of community unity can be far more effective than voting in terms of access to key infrastructure such as roads, electricity and water.

One of the fictions by which Nigeria lives is that its political and administrative divisions are not based on ethnicity. In colonial times, especially in regions of high ethnic fragmentation, district and division boundaries were often based on the extension of particular ethnic groups and explicitly named for them. However, the secular and pan-Africanist ideology that dominated in the post-Independence era required both a move away from such patterning to more inclusive structures that often split ethnic groups between administrative zones or implicitly handed power to minorities. Sometimes this was intentional, sometimes probably just a chance by-product of remote cartographers. The growth in power of local governments and the increasing articulacy of their residents have created a continuing state of friction that is little short of catastrophic for stable and effective management. At present, petitions fly thick and fast protesting the inclusion of particular villages in particular LGAs and districts are constantly being created to reflect more

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accurately the distribution of specific ethnic groupings⁸. Much bloody conflict in rural and some urban areas has resulted from perceptions of inequity. This is probably more significant in Nigeria than in other African countries, because the resources Local Government receives from the Federal Government come from oil revenues rather than the tax base. Consequently, there are varying but sometimes substantial sums to be allocated. Ironically, the constant amoeba-like division of administrative units reduces funds available to each unit. As a consequence, high transaction costs and the leaching of budgetary allocations in salaries has made Local Governments ever more unable to implement services. The consequence has been increasing numbers of districts, Local Governments and States⁹ based on ethnicity, clan or similar social groupings¹⁰.

A striking development throughout the oil-bearing zones of the south has been the evolution of violent and highly aggressive youth organisations¹¹. Known by different names, 'Bakassi Boys', 'Egbesu Youth' etc. these groups have appropriated leftist political rhetoric for a programme that resembles more closely a protection racket. Their claims are that the oil companies, the government, NGOs, the elders and other institutions have hijacked funds intended for development in rural areas and that by kidnapping executives, 'taxing' passing vehicles and sometimes warfare against other communities this unequal distribution of revenue will be rebalanced. Needless to say, their claims are not entirely without foundation. The embarrassing collapse of institutions such as OMPADEC, ostensibly created to channel funds into the development of the Niger Delta area, the grim consequences of occasional military intervention, as well as the inept community operations of the oil companies have all exacerbated the situation¹². It is frustrating that the climate of insecurity thereby created is likely to be self-defeating; the oil companies can only absorb so much in costs before other sites become more attractive. Hence the expansion of offshore drilling in Nigeria and in Equatorial Guinea and São Tome, the end result of which will be to reduce pressure on the GoN to take rural development in the Niger Delta with appropriate seriousness.

Declining investment in rural areas illustrates all too clearly the low priority the GoN attaches to rural areas; this is undoubtedly a consequence of urban elites funding their infrastructure directly from oil income without reference to productive activities. On present evidence this attitude is unlikely to change until declining soil fertility forces up the price of food and forest-stripping hikes the price of firewood to levels that cause major discontent in the cities. It might be thought that the high price of energy would force investment in alternative energy sources, for example solar energy or gas (much of which is still burned off despite the opening of the LNG plant in Bonny). In reality, however, Nigerian uptake of solar energy is virtually the lowest in West Africa, with the solar-powered street-lighting characteristic of Burkina Faso (one of the poorest countries in the world by UN reckoning) a distant dream. Reasons for this seem to be connected with the status obsessions of the Nigerian elite. Any type of green energy is perceived as much less prestigious than the wasteful systems they experience on visits to the United States¹³.

The issue of HIV/AIDS remains controversial; some figures for its incidence in Nigeria are very high but the epidemiological data on which these are based is doubtful at best. It also seems that the present impact on the rural areas is perhaps less than in towns; certainly the deficits in the rural labour force so prominent in Eastern and Southern Africa are not yet visible in Nigeria. At the same time, health services and awareness

⁸ Ngu (1994) is a general analysis of the type of rural inequity caused by boundary drawing that descends into documenting a particular plea of the Atakar people to be located in a new ethnically-based Zankan district.

⁹ Some sort of watershed was passed when Edo State was created since it was the first state to be explicitly named after its dominant ethnic group.

¹⁰ It was noted in Kebbi State in March 2003 that Local Governments were being declared unilaterally without the recognition of the Federal Government. Since no more revenue was made available, existing allocations were simply split between the new LGAs, ensuring that ever more funds were wasted on transaction costs. Similar reports have come from other states such as Bayelsa.

¹¹ Ifeka (2000a) is a useful summary of the activities of some of these groups and their historical roots, although events have moved on further since her publication. In particular, some youth movements have eschewed violence and are creating the formal structures of associations.

¹² See Ashton-Jones (1998) for a useful summary of these issues.

¹³ A useful guide to the aspirations of the Nigerian elite are to be found in glossy magazines such as *Ovation*, to be found in the waiting area of every hairdresser in Nigeria but promoting the view that success is to relocate overseas (preferably to America, London or the Gulf) and make fleeting visits to Nigeria, preferably dressed in 'traditional' garb.

in rural areas are hardly adequate in terms of prevention; the situation should clearly be continuously monitored.

4. The rural dimension in Nigeria in historical perspective

In pre-colonial times, Nigeria was almost entirely rural; it is thought that the population of a town like Kano prior to 1900 was just ten thousand persons and that the present Nigerian region had an overall population of something like ten million. City-states existed in parts of the Muslim North and in Yorubaland, but the centre was only weakly integrated with the periphery with limited flow of goods and services between rural areas and towns. Chronic warfare between many ethnic groups was a major disincentive to trade. Urbanisation took off very slowly in the early period and was undoubtedly more rapid along the coast, because of the higher volumes of trade. The intensive slave-raiding characteristic of the nineteenth century and earlier created an opposition between the walled towns of the north and the scattered settlements of the Middle Belt, often located in inaccessible areas for defence. Once the colonial regime was fully in place throughout the country, such nucleated settlements largely dispersed, and households split up in the quest for rapid access to desirable farmland¹⁴. The intensive agriculture characteristic of dense settlements in the slave-raiding era then gave way to low-intensity swidden agriculture throughout much of the Middle Belt. While infrastructure was scarce and investment in housing slight, this system persisted, but as monetarisation penetrated rural areas, houses became more significant investments and the incentive to move less often increased. The tin roof and the bicycle have probably transformed settlement structure in rural Nigeria far more than any legislation.

Larger settlements in rural areas began to redevelop under the accelerating impact of oil revenues in the 1970s. Universal Basic Education, decreed in 1975, was followed by a massive push to build schools, roads and clinics in even the remotest areas. Rural populations were not convinced overnight of the virtues of these institutions, but the value of educational certification became very apparent in an epoch when the civil service still had many places to fill. A combination of well-paid jobs and expanding economic opportunities led to a rush to send children to school and for a while this strategy worked, with a generation filling largely unnecessary posts in towns and sending back money to the countryside.

Historically, rural areas have been partly defined by inaccessibility and pre-colonial communications were largely dependent on foot and horse traffic between major urban centres. In colonial times access was so problematic and information systems so underdeveloped that rural citizens were hardly able to articulate even major issues. Access problems were responsible for the disenfranchisement of rural areas throughout much of the post-Independence era. Even in the brief periods of democracy after Independence, rural votes have often been delivered *en bloc* by corrupt chiefs. The absence of telephones, newspapers and independent radio and television meant that information was effectively denied to rural constituencies. This situation is slowly changing with the extension of electricity to more and more peri-urban locations as well as a wider distribution of newspapers with very local agendas since 1999.

The population of Nigeria (>100 million) gives it a much greater density than any other country in the region and thus places greater pressure on natural resources. In many areas, soil exhaustion and deforestation are commonplace, impacting directly on food security in rural areas and indirectly on the cities dependent on them. Urban demand for food leads to an increase in cultivated areas, without the necessary adoption of more intensive technologies or even greater land availability. Farmers must reduce the fallow period, with a consequent loss in fertility of the soil. With soil fertility decreasing, farmers are forced into more marginal land, clearing areas of bush or forest, and exposing more land to erosion. This in turn reduces mammal biodiversity in remoter areas, since farmers hunt out small species after the large herbivores have been eliminated. The anarchic nature of governance in Nigeria has meant that these common property resource

¹⁴ See Stone (1996) for an account of how the Kofyar people moved from terrace agriculture on the escarpment of the Jos Plateau to dispersed rainfed farming in the plains below.

issues¹⁵ have gained little attention but their importance is reflected in the ever-increasing incidence of inter-communal conflict. Without greater attention it is likely that Nigeria will see accelerating food crises in rural areas and increased impoverishment.

5. Political and social cleavages

It is probably true to say that there is no such entity as Nigerian ‘society’ in the sense that most democracies in the developed world would recognise. In pre-colonial times there would have been well over five hundred distinct ethnic groups and no common languages to exchange ideas. With the colonial period, the spread of Pidgin English in the south and Hausa in the north have created a certain unifying element; but it should be remembered that the majority of Nigerians do not speak the official national language, English, nor any of the major *linguae francae* to a degree that permits the transfer of complex political and social ideas. Similarly, social structures remain highly diverse, from the hierarchical, stratified societies typical of the Hausa and Kanuri areas, to the egalitarian, acephalous structures typical of the Igbo and many other southern and Middle Belt groups. Religion has become a highly salient dividing feature in recent years, but this is a new phenomenon. Except in Yorubaland, Christianity only began to make a serious impact on inland populations with the colonial era, and Islam, although probably crossing the desert in the early Middle Ages, only extended its reach to most minority populations during the same period. Traditional religion remains strong in many regions, albeit combined with a light dusting of Islam or Christianity. There is also little doubt that Islamic/Christian cleavages have been reinforced by external interests and that these have been seized on by internal elements to further essentially political rather than religious ends. As regards ethnicity, trends appear somewhat contradictory, since in the towns inter-marriage is breaking down conventional ethnic boundaries with religion or possession of a shared *lingua franca* often being a unifying factor. In rural areas, the increasing creation of ethnically based local Governments and the formation of ethnic development associations is paradoxically promoting the solidification of ethnic boundaries.

Women are assigned a subordinate role in all traditional ideological structures, and in Islamic societies have been increasingly repressed by the extension of purdah to rural areas. The spread of Shari’a law has reinforced the subjection of women in Muslim areas, rather counter to the national trend which has been to increase women’s access to resources. In many societies of the south, women had considerably more social and economic freedom, as the phenomenon of large-scale women traders suggests¹⁶. Even so, they were rarely permitted significant political power, a trend which continues today with the Nigerian state.

A division that has come into focus in the second half of the twentieth century is between elders and youth. Generally speaking in the precolonial era, youth were subordinate to their elders and social structures often enforced a hierarchy of age, through title-taking ceremonies and admission to decision-making bodies. However, the growth of education and the move to towns has created a cleavage in that youth are often better educated and wealthier than the older generation. They certainly have greater aspirations, and these are often at the root of inter-generational conflicts; in many areas the youth are challenging their elders. The situation in the oil-bearing zones has already been mentioned, but rural discontent has surfaced in many parts of Nigeria. From a positive perspective, youth represent a key channel of innovation from urban to rural areas. Experience in towns is important in seeding new ideas for businesses, crafts and produce grown for sale.

These political and social cleavages have strong implications for the structure of trade and investment in rural areas. Banks in Nigeria are curious entities, whose primary function is probably the laundering of oil money and function secondarily to pay salaries. But they do not act as safe repositories of capital and they do not really function to facilitate long-distance trade. Credit-cards, ATMs and even cheque-books hardly

¹⁵ Ite (2001) is an account of the failure of various development initiatives to halt the loss of Tropical Moist Forest in SE Nigeria, within a context of predatory timber-cutters from outside the region and weak enforcement of PA regulations.

¹⁶ Women in Hausaland were not excluded from trading and processing on their own account (see Hill 1977:173-4) but their inability to move around freely severely limited their access to credit and trade networks compared with Yoruba and Nupe women.

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function and rural banks are more likely to be used for housing goats¹⁷. As a consequence, long-distance trade and thus credit depends on trust and that in turn depends on religious and ethnic affiliation. Long-distance trade in pre-colonial Nigeria was principally in the hands of the Hausa and the Shuwa and these groups still predominate in the North. New trading groups, notably the Igbo, have established their own networks based primarily on ethnicity and secondarily on religion. This is also the basis for rural investment; traders tend to develop contractual relations with producers of similar ethnicity or religion¹⁸. But it should also be remembered that the volume of rural investment is slight; producers tend to depend on local credit, often from kin, for processing tools or to expand capacity. Savings in rural areas are above all formalised in rotating credit associations, such as *esusu* and *adashe*, where members contribute monthly and get a payout every few months, which is often immediately spent.

The extension of education to more and more remote areas has had a significant impact on the structure of rural society. In the early period, especially when Universal Primary Education was first implemented in 1975, almost any child passing out from secondary school left the rural areas never to return; the civil service beckoned. So unwilling were trained teachers to take employment in remote areas that VSOs and Youth Corpers were taken on to fill the gap. As it became less feasible to employ all graduates, more and more secondary school leavers returned to their villages and trained teachers and health workers accepted jobs in rural areas. At first this created an unsatisfactory situation, since the school leavers had been inculcated with ideas about their capacities that precluded them from working on the farm. However, it gradually became apparent that there was a strong link between work and eating and the process of returning to the village and taking up farming again is now widely accepted. Ideally such 'young farmers' would be the main contact point for the ADPs and would become the channel through which information could flow from the extension services to the grassroots. Evidence for this appears to be rather limited, perhaps because the extension system is in freefall and input supply more meagre than ever.

Another highly characteristic aspect of the rural dimension is migration¹⁹. This has a 'traditional' seasonal aspect but the rise of cities has created innovative patterns in the twentieth century. Table 5 presents a simplified characterisation of categories of migrants;

Table 5. Categories of rural migrants

Migration categories	Characteristics
Seasonal	Men typically migrate for physical labour during the dry season and return to farm during the wet Herders and fishers migrate to dry season pastures or seasonal fishing grounds usually splitting the household
Permanent	Educated men (20-45) typically migrate for both casual and permanent urban employment Entire households migrate for permanent urban employment Entire households migrate to other rural areas in search of new farmland

Rural-rural migration is much less studied than migration to the towns but is important numerically and is also the source both of ethnic conflict and considerable political strategising. Typically, preferential male migration, usually for seasonal agricultural labour, creates a situation where women, old people and children predominate in many rural communities. The Middle Belt has been stereotyped as 'underpopulated' and this is certainly true historically in comparison to the dense settlement in parts of the north and southeast²⁰. A consequence has been that since the 1960s, farmers from both north and south have been migrating into the region to begin cultivation, often disregarding existing systems of land tenure and creating grounds for

¹⁷ Onugu (2000) reviewing the 'Community Banks' set up in 1991, concludes they have had 'mixed success', which is certainly a tactful formulation.

¹⁸ Older market systems in ethnically homogeneous areas have always developed long-distance trade along ethnic lines (see Hodder & Ukwu 1969 for a description of the Yoruba and Igbo systems). See Porter (1994, 2002) for a description of how the horticulture production and marketing on the Jos Plateau has been re-aligned along ethnic lines in the 1990s.

¹⁹ Migration is dealt with at length in another Driver of Change paper by the present author and thus only summarised here.

²⁰ See Maps 25a,b in Barbour et al. (1982) which plot the data from the 1963 census.

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continuing ethnic conflict²¹. The recent expansion of *fadama* cultivation throughout the North has exacerbated this situation markedly, as farmers leave exhausted rainfed farms to convert riverine grasslands to horticulture. As they become established they soon make use of political strategies to exclude the original owners²².

An aspect of migration that has received considerable attention in the Nigerian media and in policy documents is conflict in rural areas, especially between herders and farmers²³. Most typically, cattle stray on cropped fields and farmers demand compensation, which may be settled amicably and lead to conflict. Although this has always occurred on a small scale, the 1990s saw a major growth in conflict, mainly caused by demographic expansion, leading farmers to cultivate traditional cattle routes, and the increasing use of formerly wild riverine areas for irrigated cultivation. As the semi-arid regions have become 'full', herders have pushed further and further south, making use of modern veterinary techniques to keep their animals alive in high-risk areas. In doing so, they have come into contact with tuber-growing cultivators who are indifferent to the traditional exchange relations of milk for grain and manure for cereal residues characteristic of the zones further north. In addition, the spread of modern automatic weapons has led to an increased likelihood that conflicts will involve fatalities. Government intervention (usually at state or local government level) has been highly variable, with responses that range from harsh police action to the formation of conflict resolution committees. But the long-term prospects for pastoralists are poor, simply because they are greatly outnumbered by farmers who are everywhere pressing for greater security of land tenure.

6. Political and economic environment

The Nigerian government is almost entirely controlled by urban interest groups and virtually nothing government has enacted or promulgated in recent years has benefited rural populations. Laws (or decrees under military government) can be enacted at Federal and State level, and by-laws at Local Government level. Table 6 provides a synopsis of Federal Laws and Decrees that relevant to the rural dimension.

Table 6. Federal laws and decrees relating to the rural domain

Federal	Instruments	Date
Forestry	Forestry Law of Nigeria	1938
	Northern Nigeria Forest Law	1946
	NA Forestry Rules	1945
Wildlife	Wild Animal Laws	1963
	Wild Animal Laws Amended	1975
	National Parks Decree No. 36	1991
	Federal Decree	1999
Fisheries	Fisheries Law	1982
Livestock	Grazing Reserves	1965
Environment	Environmental Protection Law Decree No. 45	1988/1989
	Environmental Impact Assessment Decree No. 82	1992
	Pollution Control Decree 46/8	1990
	Water Decree	1992
Other	Land Use Decree	1978

²¹ James (n.d.) presents quite a detailed survey of this process with substantial documentation. However, the credibility of his case is partly undermined by a politicised conclusion pleading for greater self-determination for Middle Belt peoples.

²² See Blench, Daniel & Hassan (2003) for documentation of this process on the Sokoto-Rima system in Kebbi State.

²³ This topic has been reviewed in a separate paper by the same author also commissioned by DFID, 'Conflict between pastoralists and cultivators in Nigeria' (latest version April 2003). It is also discussed in numerous reports and published documents, such as Blench (1984, 1991, 1994, 1996), Hadejia (1993), Ingawa, Ega & Erhabor (1998), Schoen, Hassan & Okoli (2002), Blench et al. (2003) Blench, Daniel, & Hassan (2003).

The tenor of these laws is typically confrontational; activities are forbidden and policing to arrest offenders is the remedy. However, in reality their function is largely to provide income for government agents. Thus, wildlife and forestry laws do not prevent animals being poached or trees being cut down; they merely provide an income in payment to rangers of forest guards charged with preventing this from happening. A similar attitude is replicated at state and local level; fines and payments are the engines of natural resource management. The apathetic attitude towards the uncontrolled impact of extractive industries, such as firewood, timber, water and bushmeat, are rapidly depleting rural areas of key survival resources. The negative consequences of these attitudes are visible and are likely to accelerate in the next few years. The insouciance with which government treats the interests of rural populations is nowhere better exemplified than through dams and other impoundments (Box 1).

Another side of this is the virtual collapse of agricultural extension throughout the country. Nigeria formerly had a strong commitment to agricultural extension, especially in the period when cash crops made a substantial contribution to the economy. The ADP (Agricultural Development Project) system, funded by World Bank loans, beginning in the 1970s with a pilot project in Funtua was gradually extended to cover the country. It was combined with a massive programme of fertiliser subsidy and eventually cost the country in the order of two billion dollars. Many innovative technologies were promoted during this period, notably small pump irrigation, maize, fertilisers and tractors, improved cultivars of many crops. However, when funding dried up the deficit was not made up by the Federal Government and most ADPs have been starved of operational funds since 2000, and are limited to paying salaries²⁶. If the argument presented here is correct then the Federal Government and indeed international donors should re-prioritise its spending to support agricultural extension. There is, however, no evidence that this is likely to happen in the near future. It would therefore be better to simply get rid of 'shell' institutions that no longer function and devote resources to combining salaries with operational funds, to make any impact in rural areas.

Another way of thinking about change in the agricultural sector is through the lens of food security. West Africa agriculture has historically always been about minimising risk through a diversified cropping pattern, flexible planting schedules and low-input species and cultivars. The oil-boom had two important consequences that acted on these traditional strategies; food importation on a massive scale to make up for any local shortfall and the introduction of subsidised inputs through the ADP system. Farmers were encouraged to switch to maize, tractors and fertiliser, as these were extremely cheap by international standards and there were short-term gains in cereal outputs. The World Bank, which encouraged this system and lent the Nigerian Government \$2 billion to support it, intended the subsidies to be gradually reduced until farmers had control of the economics of these systems. In fact, however, the Federal Government maintained subsidies until recently, because of the benefits to a ring of contractors. Irregular availability of inputs at unpredictable

Box 1. The fate of the Hadejia-Nguru wetlands

The Hadejia-Nguru wetlands is a major area of flooded swampland in NE Nigeria. A RAMSAR site, it is known for its breeding birds and its overall biodiversity. It supports very substantial populations of farmers, fishermen and pastoralists as well as providing wild resources such as firewood and dum palm leaves to outside populations. Nonetheless, the water that supplies it is gradually being shut off by a series of impoundments, notably the Tiga and Challawa dams which bring urban water to Kano and irrigate fields where farmers are encouraged to grow wheat, a prestigious but highly unsuitable crop. Despite its obligations under the RAMSAR convention, and well-argued economic analyses²⁴ showing the considerable benefits of leaving the wetlands as it is in terms of overall productivity, the Federal Government has expressed its intention to go ahead with further impoundments, the extension of the Kano River Valley Project and the Kafin Zaki dam in Bauchi which will virtually extinguish the wetlands and bring to an end the production systems of its inhabitants. Even abstraction for urban water supply to Kano, which cannot be avoided could be made substantially more efficient²⁵.

Source: Blench et al. (2003)

²⁴ Barbier et al. (1993)

²⁵ See HR Wallingford (2002), a report which also lays out the complete disregard of the consequences for rural people when taking action to secure urban water supply.

²⁶ ADPs depend principally on one-off projects such as *Fadama* I and the recent food-security initiative. But these are *ad hoc* and highly targeted. They are no substitute for core funding to agricultural extension.

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prices meant that farmers kept hoping the good times would return. Only recently, when all inputs have reached full international market prices have farmers finally given up on the government and returned to production systems that assume no inputs at all and maximise food security in the case of climatic discontinuities. Hence through the northern subhumid and semi-arid zones, sorghum has again become the key crop²⁷, exactly as it was prior to the introduction of the ADP system in the 1970s.

An issue that has seen increasing direct action by rural populations in recent times is insecurity. Nigerian cities have always been high-crime areas, but the countryside has generally been relatively safe. However, the armed robbers who have infested main inter-city highways are increasingly targeting rural markets and smaller roads. Conflict between herders and cultivators has spilled over into virtually uncontrolled banditry in some regions. Although armed robbery units of the police patrol major highways, they are generally unwilling to enter small population centres or to track bandits across the bush. One response to this has been for rural communities and sometimes local governments to set up teams of ‘vigilantes’, who are often hunters armed with dane-guns or even spears. These vigilantes patrol rural areas at risk at night, such as roads from markets and road junctions where traders stay open late. Needless to say, this type of ad hoc law enforcement is not subject to any institutional restraints and is a poor reflection on a country with an immense security apparatus, but it may well be effective in reducing rural insecurity.

7. Significance for pro-poor change.

Without halting the decline in the rural economy, Nigeria cannot develop an effective industrial base and will therefore be in no position to respond to the needs of post-oil restructuring. More importantly perhaps, oil money seems not to be able to deliver improved living standards in rural areas and thus achieve pro-poor change. In a sense, if urban populations were compelled to pay the true cost of the goods and services they extract from rural areas, pro-poor change would be given a major impulse by a shift in favour of more effective CPR management. Overall, and more typical of remoter areas, the strip-mining of CPRs (water, firewood, fish) by the towns and a failure to invest in intensification strategies in rural production is creating an all too familiar cycle of soil fertility exhaustion, declining yields and intra-rural migration²⁸.

The rural areas have shown a dynamism quite lacking in other sectors of the Nigerian economy and have the productive capacity both to supply urban demand and to export widely. Nigeria has a road and transport infrastructure quite unlike any other West African country. In the Jos area, for example, there has been a massive expansion of irrigated vegetable production since the mid-1990s to meet the demands of urban kitchens in both Abuja and Jos itself and standards of living have generally improved²⁹. Although remarkable systems of soil and water conservation exist³⁰ and are continuing to evolve in rural areas neither Nigerian institutions nor donors have taken any interest in promoting and extending these. They spread slowly from farmer to farmer without the potential added value that research elsewhere might bring.

One reason government is not under greater pressure to resolve rural issues is because, paradoxically, many households straddle both zones. The custom of having town and country ‘branches’ of an extended family seems to have been traditional in the southwest, but is increasingly common in many regions. When oil began to finance bureaucratic employment, many rural households sent their children to be educated in the hope that they would find jobs and begin to send money back from the cities. Similarly, whole households transplanted themselves to the cities in the wake of subsidised housing. The collapse of this artificial economic structure and consequent profound urban poverty has encouraged a partial drift back to the villages. Indeed some of the most vicious rural conflict has been over access to land, as returnees attempt to reclaim their land, which is commonly reallocated in the usufruct systems typical of much of rural Nigeria.

²⁷ This observation is based on the cropping patterns observed in a series of interviews across the Middle Belt in September 2003.

²⁸ Cf. the Nigeria analyses in Blench and Slaymaker (2002a), Slaymaker and Blench (2002b).

²⁹ cf. Porter (2002)

³⁰ Mortimore & Adams (1999) analyse the coping strategies of four rural villages spread across the semi-arid zone and try to go beyond the ‘narrative of crisis’ to a more balanced account of household economy.

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Statistics of any reliability on internal and urban-rural migration are rare and tend to be outdated³¹. But one of the more intriguing aspects of recent changes is the weakening of the clear demarcation between rural and urban in the penumbra of large conurbations. Once electricity and roads reach satellite villages, the temptation to move to the town weakens since some of its allure, in terms of television and shopping, are accessible, while the supply of staples to the town becomes a viable business.

Forces driving pro-poor change can be attributed in summary to two elements, demographic growth and a political economy which continues to concentrate power in the hands of an elite. Nonetheless, a more nuanced picture can disentangle positives and negatives among those factors driving change (Table 7). A simplified summary of likely impact on pro-poor change is given in the +/- column.

Table 7. Forces driving pro-poor change and their impact

Forces driving change	Comments	+/-
Demographic growth	Without intensification, higher population creates greater pressure on land, encourages environmentally unsound practice and reduces food security. This in turn makes the urban poor more insecure.	-
Falling value of Naira	Makes Nigerian agricultural produce more competitive and spurs the low-input agriculture typical of poor households	+
Increased urbanisation (1)	Increases demand for food produced in rural areas	+
Increased urbanisation (2)	Puts unsustainable pressure on rural resources, notably firewood, water, fish and bushmeat	-
Quasi-democratic government	Although the impact should be positive for remote rural groups, empirically it seems that funds have been cut to all agencies serving needs of rural population and urban elites are accumulating surplus wealth ever more effectively	-
Rising civic insecurity	Inter- and intra-community violence has increased dramatically and policing has proven quite ineffective in controlling it. The rural poor are compelled to invest in improved security rather than community development	-
Improved communications	Investment in communications has increased markedly in cities with mobile phones and the internet. a lack of investment in rural areas is exacerbating the 'digital divide'.	-

In the light of these trends, and viewing potential donor strategy from the point of view of degree of integration in the market, Table 8 takes an adapted form of Farrington and Gill's strategies for combining production and social protection objectives and suggests their potential within Nigeria;

³¹ Some texts that discuss these issues are Sada & Oguntoyibo (1981), Sada & Osirike (1984) and Barbour et al. (1982).

Table 8. Combining production and social protection objectives

No.	Strategy	Potential within Nigeria
1.	Reducing risk and uncertainty both by increasing the benefits of growth over time, and reducing their variability	Typically, promotion of new, multi-enterprise farming systems (crops, livestock, trees, fish) and counter-season production. Already widely practised and could be easily extended.
2.	Reducing risk and uncertainty by supporting the pro-poor resolution of conflict over common resources (e.g. water, forest, grazing land)	Nigerian top-down government has a poor record of managing CPRs effectively and urban requirements are privileged over rural areas.
3.	Reducing the vulnerability of poor households to idiosyncratic and covariate shocks	Typically, improving access to land, communications and financing. These are all improving slowly in the democratic era, but could easily be strengthened by committed donors.
4.	Responding to emergencies and to complex political instability/Helping conflict-affected areas	Nigerian record very poor and response often heavy-handed. Government disinclined to attend to donors' concerns.
5.	Migration (seasonal, permanent) and commuting need to be monitored more closely and supported better	Migration completely uncontrolled despite the often violent consequences. Transport strategy (including road-building, fuel subsidies) subject to political interference. Appropriate transport could be encouraged by intervention
6.	Improving market integration/ Developing the rural non-farm economy	Strongly linked to 3. and 5. in that improved communications and facilitated, structured migration diversify livelihoods and expand market integration, trends already under way in Nigeria
7.	Implementing regional strategies to protect fragile environments and encourage sustainable farming and livestock production	Nigerian record currently very poor but current low-input farming could easily be adapted to niche markets such as organic and specialty products

(adapted from Farrington and Gill 2002)

Table 8 suggest that some strategies have a much greater potential to drive pro-poor change than others, partly because they would build on trends already under way. The challenge, in the light of partial success, might be to prevent the urban elite from capturing the benefits. In the light of the Preliminary analysis of Drivers of Change, Table 9 interprets the rural dimension in terms of the key structural factors leading to pro-poor change;

Table 9. The rural dimension and key structural factors

		A	P
Current / potential impact on key structural issues	Overall poverty reduction	L	H
	Strengthened accountability	L	M
	Pro-poor government expenditure	L	H
	Pro-poor growth	L	H
Time-frame	Short-term	M	
	Medium-term	H	
	Long-term	H	
	Current Contribution to Positive Change	L	
	Impact of Negative Change	L	

A = Actual P = Potential L = Limited; M = Moderate; H = High

Overall, the prospects for rural areas in Nigeria are not encouraging despite the dynamism evident in the informal sector. While the urban elites continue to compete for oil revenues, their interest in rural areas is slight except when civil disorder threatens the flow of cash, as it does in the Delta. Moreover, the urban poor depend heavily on goods and services supplied by the rural poor; if the situation in the countryside is neglected, the consequences for urban dwellers may be correspondingly worse. Despite this, democracy has

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functioned as a 'peace dividend', linking Nigerian producers to the world community and gradually increasing communications and investment in rural areas. Investment by international donors is relatively small but growing. Producers are finding ways to access inputs, financing and information outside official government systems and this trend will continue. The main negative factors that will affect pro-poor change are population growth and environmental degradation. Population growth has proven hard to influence due to the lack of social protection, but agricultural and agroforestry systems are subject to change and provide an appropriate entry-point for donors.

8. Recommendations: follow-up research

Nigeria presents such deficits in terms of reliable data and statistics that studies in almost every area covered in this report would contribute to the analysis of specific aspects of the rural dimension relevant to driving pro-poor social, political and economic change. Annex 2 presents an outline for deepening data collection in as many areas as possible as an evidence base for pro-poor intervention. The following headings relate to coherence and dissemination strategies.

Donor coherence

Donor influence in Nigeria is small in comparison to many other LDCs because of the low percentage of GNP represented by donor funds (<7%). Nonetheless, this influence is further reduced by a visible lack of coherence in policies, which can be exploited by astute potential recipients. In the case of the rural domain this is perhaps even more important, since many donors themselves are embarrassingly unaware of the situation in rural areas and are not in a position to agree on a coherent policy framework. If donors were to represent a united policy front on issues such as environmental degradation or agricultural intensification or deforestation, the opportunity to influence GoN policy would be substantially greater.

Dissemination

Reports, well-argued as they might be, do not always have a very encouraging fate in Nigeria. Newly developing digital video technology may offer an avenue for making a greater impact through the creation of Video CDs. Many newer laptops can cut such CDs and they can be played back on almost all computers now, unlike DVDs. Reports that consisted of well-structured VCDs in a more accessible style containing short films of interviews and quotes from stakeholders to illustrate text points, could both be played back at leisure by government officials and academics and shown on laptops in offices without computers or electricity. Newly portable and low-priced projectors could be carried around to present to small groups even in remote areas.

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Annex 1. Proposed reports for commissioning in follow-up phase

1. Environmental projections

This report should examine likely environmental trends, notably deforestation, shortening fallow cycles and consequent declining soil fertility, unsustainable groundwater extraction, impact of pollution and similar issues and their likely impact on food security and political and social stability.

2. Economic place of rural production and projected trends

This paper has dealt with likely trends, projections and somewhat antique statistics based on doubtful data collection. It is easy to speculate on migration trends or urbanisation based purely on anecdotal evidence but difficult to generalise these observations to a national picture. However, an examination of internationally available databases such as FAOSTAT, to which the Nigerian government at least in theory contributes

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national statistics, indicates the weakness of the evidence for such trends³². Political excesses and inequities of income and revenue distribution would become more apparent if more credible data were available in many fields and donors undoubtedly have a comparative advantage in financing statistics collections, GIS formation and integration and dissemination of results. In turn this would put greater pressure on the planning system to develop more rational systems of infrastructure development and provide rural activist groups with evidence to support their claims.

³² A companion report submitted together with this document examines the livestock data in much greater detail.