

Development of Rural Roads in Anambra State, Nigerian, 1976-1991

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Abstract

Rural roads are invaluable infrastructure in rural development of any society or polity. It is against this backdrop that governments consider the development of rural roads a key component of rural development programme. The people are known to complement this effort by embarking on self-help projects on rural road development. There is the need to document and analyse these efforts within geo-political administrative context and in time perspectives and horizon. This paper undertakes this task with respect to Anambra state, Nigeria, in the period, 1976 to 1991. It discusses rural road development as a component of overall rural development of the state. Data for the paper are derived from primary and secondary sources. Its presentation is chronological. It adopts quantitative and qualitative methods of research. It does not lend its analysis to any theoretical construct. Rather, it critically engages data to substantiate the thrust of its argument. It observes that government and the people made remarkable efforts to improve the conditions of rural roads and embarked on new road projects. Yet, these could not significantly solve the problem and inadequacy of rural road network in the state.

Keywords: Rural roads, Development, Challenges, Anambra State

Introduction:

In considering rural development in any polity or state, economists, administrators and policy makers have always allotted prominent place to rural road. This is against the backdrop of the invaluable role rural roads play in the overall economic development of the state. Policymakers consider it critical in the uplift of the conditions in the rural areas.¹ Politicians and public office seekers are also known to put its provision as a cardinal programme in their manifestoes and a sure way to attract votes during election and re-election into political offices. Paradoxically, this awareness has not so far been matched by sustained attempts at the study of the development of rural road in Anambra State, Nigeria in the period, 1976 to 1991. Existing studies tend to emphasize the place of roads in the growth of local trade, approaches to rural roads maintenance and rural transportation². These studies are not set across the state nor are they presented in time perspective. The current effort marks a departure from this pattern. It discusses the trend in development of rural road in the state in encompassing time horizon.

The paper is organized in four sections. The first provides background and introductory information on the paper. The second discusses rural road development in the 'state' prior to 1976, the take-off year of the study. This would inform us of the state of rural roads at the inception of this study and enable us to make valid conclusions on rural road development in the period in focus. The third is chronological in presentation, covering the period, 1976-1991. This period is further delineated into two phases. The first, 1976 to 1983 and the second, 1984-1991. This delineation is informed by the varying emphasis on the subject in the two phases. The fourth presents the concluding remarks.

Development of Rural Roads Prior to 1976

This section discusses development of rural roads in the area of Anambra State prior to the take-off time of this paper. This will apprise us of the state of rural roads in the 'state' and enable us appreciate the achievements and successes thereto, within the time horizon of this paper.

Rural road development occupied an important position in government programmes and policies from the colonial period. However, roads that tended to impact on the rural areas were the feeder roads and communal roads. The feeder roads were constructed and maintained by the Native Administration/Authority (NA) in conjunction with the local communities/villages, while the communal roads were constructed and maintained single-handedly by the communities/villages. The communal roads linked the communities/villages to one another and to the immediate administrative

centre. The feeder roads, on the other hand, connected administrative centres to one another as well as to the principal markets. They were initially known as Native Administration roads, but with subsequent developments, changes and amendments in the local government laws of Eastern Nigeria between 1950 and 1960 they, by the latter year, became County Council roads. Commenting on the method and process of making these roads and their status, Njoku observes,

Such local roads (Later graded as 'C' roads) were made mainly by widening existing footpaths by clearing with machetes and grubbing up stumps and roots. Often, most of these roads were initially unsuitable for motor cars and were appropriately described as bicycle or motorcycle roads. In the course of time, through yearly improvements, they became usable by light cars and acquired the status of grade 'C' roads.³

Part of the fund for the construction of the roads was grants from Colonial Development and Welfare Funds. The grants amounted to about 50 percent of the cost of the project. The balance came from the revenues of the Native (later Divisional) Administration. Local communities contributed labour and provided materials such as stones and gravel. The Public Works Department (PWD) provided engineering advice for bridge construction.⁴

The initial government plan on rural road development was to provide access roads to the areas it had agricultural establishments such as palm plantations, which were vital to the economy of Eastern Region. This was principally to make for easy accessibility of such places, enhance their development and facilitate the evacuation of the products of the plantations. It would appear that the Eastern Nigerian government sustained this idea in its development plan. For, under the Eastern Nigerian Development Plan (1962-68), government's policy on rural road development was still to provide link roads to its Plantations and Farm Settlements and to such areas that had semi-urban nucleus.⁵ A remarkable achievement in the period was the elevation of some of the roads to trunk 'B' network by converting them to bituminous surfaces. The roads completed and their mileage in our area of study by March 31, 1965 were; Ozalla-Ogugu, 12 miles, Ikem-Eha-Amufu-Nkalagu, 18 miles and Amike-Effum 19 miles. Those under construction at that time were Ozubulu-Atani, 9 miles; Obosi-Nkpor 4 miles. In addition, government had conducted survey preparatory for the construction of the following roads, Enugu-Ozalla; Awka-Agulu-Ekwulobia-Uga, Nnobi-Adazi and Nnewi-Akokwa-Okigwe, roads.⁶ All these notwithstanding, one could still say that the communal and feeder roads which were the hub of communication and transportation in the rural areas received only scant attention. Most still remained earth-surfaced, and at best, gravel roads. Moreover, the councils and local communities upon whose shoulders the maintenance of the roads rested could not bear the task. The practice of maintaining the roads by labourers and communal efforts proved ineffectual. Thus, they remained perpetually in a deplorable state. This made movement on them arduous: they were susceptible to flood and mud during the rainy season and to sand during the dry season.⁷

The state of the roads became a matter of concern to the Eastern Nigerian government. To assist the Councils in the maintenance of the roads, the government bought road construction equipment which the Councils hired on easy terms for the purpose of maintaining their roads. The reason for this was the high cost of the machinery and equipment which most Councils could not afford.⁸ There is no accurate record on the mileage of these categories of roads and the number of culverts and bridges on them. But suffice it to say that substantial mileage of such roads and number of bridges were constructed and maintained before the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War.

Most of these roads, bridges and culverts came to ruins as a result of the devastation of the war. At the end of the war, there were fervent efforts by the government, the local communities and Relief Agencies to rehabilitate them. The Community Development Division of the newly established Divisional Administration System organized self-help efforts for reconstructing village and former County Council roads. The Works Units of the Divisions provided technical services in the road reconstruction projects; the Rehabilitation Commission (RC) provided food and tools for the Food-for-work programme, while the Cooperative for America Everywhere (CARE) provided bridge materials and a good supply of

culvert rings, tools and technical advice as well as incentives for the workers in the first eighteen months of the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation programme. As the CARE and Rehabilitation Commission (RC) wound up their operations, the Community Development Division bore the brunt of the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the roads. This was not without attendant challenges. The problems of incentives for the workers arose, but this did not significantly hamper the progress of work.⁹

It deserves to be stated that the concerted efforts of these stakeholders yielded noticeable achievements in rural roads reconstruction and rehabilitation. The table below shows the number of roads, their mileage; number of bridges, their span, and the number of culverts and their breadth completed in our area of study between 1970 and 1972.

Table 1: The number of roads, their mileage; number of bridges their span and the number of culverts and their breadth completed in 'Anambra State' between 1970 and 1972,

Division	No. of Roads	Mileage	Bridge completed number and span	Culvert No. and Span
Abakaliki	3	-	5(106'0")	2(29 feet)
Aguata	4	-	4(106'0")	2(48 feet)
Awgu	4	-	4(180'0")	2 (14 feet)
Ezzikwo	17	21	13(289'0")	-
Igbo-Eze	6	98	-	-
Ihiala	1	-	1(150'0")	-
Ishielu	7	-	7(200'0")	36
Isi-uzo	2	10½	-	-
Njikoka	4	34	6 (154'0")	7 (48 feet)
Nkanu	5	-	5(56'0")	1(3 feet)
Nnewi	8	-	5(106'0")	1(3 feet)
Nsukka	2	8	-	1(7 feet)
Grand total	73	171½	50(1,301'8")	53 (152 feet)
Total for ECS	150	455	74(2,337'6")	115 (387 feet)

Source: Extracted from Table IX: "Summary, Road construction and reconstruction projects showing mileage of roads, span of bridges, number of culverts etc, completed by Divisions 1971/72" East Central State of Nigeria: Three years after the Civil War (Official Document No. 6 of 1974), 25 in Box 72 NAE.

The Community Development Division kept alive the zeal to maintain these roads. The East Central State Government (ECSG) sustained the practice of providing road construction machinery and equipment to the Councils initiated by the government of the defunct Eastern Nigeria. This action was informed by the government's realization that such roads could enhance economic development, facilitate evacuation of farm produce and improve the physical environment of the rural communities.

Available data tend to suggest that there was a steady increase in road projects in the 'state'. For instance, there were altogether 371 road projects in 1974/75 as against 229 for 1973/74.¹⁰ The Rural Works Unit of the Community Development Division gave technical and supervisory advice to communities that embarked on road development projects. More projects could have been executed but for the constant breakdown of construction equipment. However, up to 1975, the terminus of this section of our study, the state of most of these roads did not improve remarkably, for they were still earth surfaced roads, prone to the challenges mentioned earlier.¹¹

Development of Rural Roads (1976-1991)

This section of the paper discusses the development of rural roads in state in the period the state existed as a distinct administrative and geo-political entity. This period could be delineated into two phases, 1976-1983 and 1984-1991. The timeline of this delineation is predicated on the varying emphasis on the subject matter in the two phases.

First Phase, (1976-1983)

The overall importance of rural road in rural development can hardly be overemphasized. Access roads could lead to the evacuation of agricultural products and the opening up of such places for increased economic activities. The communal roads could lead to greater interaction, interdependence and exchange of agricultural products between the rural communities and supply of same to the urban areas. However, our study in the previous section of this paper, would appear to reveal that the village and communal roads that served as the hub of communication between the rural communities were in a deplorable state. The fate of the roads that link the rural communities with the urban centres was not different in the period covered by that section. But within the present period, Government made remarkable achievements in her effort to develop rural roads in the state. Three factors explain this. First, the new local government system introduced by the 1976 Local Government Reform tended to increase the pace of rural road construction. The local government headquarters were 'third order growth centres' from which development diffused into remote sections of the local government area.¹² Government constructed link roads to connect the local government headquarters with the state capital. Communities cut across by such roads benefitted in the process. Again, the Works Department of the local governments assisted communities desirous of grading and expanding their roads with the council's construction equipment or to hire from the State Ministry of Works. Such communities could hire the equipment at ₦10 per day instead of ₦60 or more per day used to hire from private sources. In this way, more roads were constructed and rehabilitated at reduced cost. They also provided technical expertise in bridge and culvert construction.¹³ Available records indicate a steady increase in the number of road projects, their length and number of bridges and culverts constructed by the communities. For instance, in 1976/77, 132 communities in 21 Local Government Areas did 213 access roads projects of 1088.22km, 70 bridges and 87 culverts for ₦740,822.76 as against 315 (1355.66km) access roads, 78 bridges and 95 culverts at a cost of ₦920 431.09, for 1977/78.¹⁴ Regrettably, lots of construction work were either delayed and/or abandoned by communities, because of the small number and constant breakdown of construction equipment. This made the Works Unit which in itself was poorly staffed, unable to meet the communities' demands.¹⁵

Second, the State's Military Administration embarked on massive road construction "designed mainly to open large tracts of arable land and facilitate movement of goods from rural to urban areas."¹⁶ This was reflected in government's commitment of 15 per cent of its capital outlay on this sector in the 1978/79 Approved Estimate.¹⁷ The succeeding civilian administration sustained the tempo in road construction initiated by the Military Administration. The first Executive Governor of the state, Chief Jim Nwobodo, had road construction as one of the cardinal objectives of his administration. He translated this to action by the number and length of roads constructed during his tenure and capital outlay on land transportation. On the average, it constituted 15.3 per cent of the capital expenditure during his tenure.¹⁸ Prominent among the roads completed during his administration were; Okija – Ihiala-Uli Road, Nkpor-Ojoto-Ideani-Nnobi Road, Isiagu-Achiagu Road, Onueke- NORCAP – Eyigba-Nkwoagu-Noyo Road, Nnewi-Nobi-Agulu Road, Onitsha-Ossomari-Ogwu-Ikpele-Atani-Ozubulu Road, Agbani-Akpugo-Amagunze Road, Amaechi Obeagu – Amodu Agbani Road, and so on.

The third factor was the Federal Military Government's intervention in the reconstruction of some Trunk 'A' and 'B' roads in the state.¹⁹ This, in no small measure, complemented state government's effort to open up the rural areas. It also alleviated the financial burden of road construction and maintenance on the state government. Prominent among the roads constructed by the Federal Government were: Awka-Agulu-Ekwulobia-Uga-Okigwe Road; Onitsha-Nsugbe-Ikem-Ayamelum-Adani-Nsukka Road; Oji River-Achi-Maku Road; Abakaliki-Amaegu-OnuekeAfikpo Road; Abakaliki-Ndiakparata-Ogoja Road; Oba-Nnewi-Amichi-Uga Road, among others. Unfortunately, as the conditions of most of these roads deteriorated, there was a low drive by the NPN- controlled Federal government to rehabilitate them. Nor was it eager to grant the state government the permission to do so. These roads became riddled with pot holes and scrapped surfaces, making them almost non-motorable. They were, thus, left in a deplorable state. However, the feeder roads to these main trunk roads were graded and maintained by the local governments and the communities.²⁰

The place of these roads in opening up the rural communities, transportation of agricultural products to the urban centres and the growth of markets in the rural areas of the state cannot be overstated. Such towns cut across by the roads enjoyed increased economic activity. Instances of these abound. It would be trite and monotonous to discuss each; hence the Eke-Imeoha in Onueke, Ezza Local Government Area would be used in this paper as a classic example. The market received a bustle in activities with the construction of Abakaliki – Afikpo Road which traversed the town. It attracted the attention of the Local Government Authority which transformed the market into lock-up shops while the roofs of the open stalls were rebuilt with corrugated iron sheets. The Local Government Authority also established a motor park adjacent the market. The market attracted residents in Abakaliki urban who sourced their foodstuff and provisions from the direct producers in the surrounding towns that brought their farm products to the market on the major market days. This led to increased earning for rural farmers on their products as it minimized the activities of the middlemen/retailers who often underpriced the products in order to maximize profit.²¹

In addition, it became relatively easy for indigenes of communities' cut across by such roads who were resident in urban centres to access their hometowns. Most preferred to spend the weekends in the villages where they also attended social functions such as funeral and wedding ceremonies. Such stay, though brief, injected capital into the rural areas as most of these people bought their personal needs and foodstuff from the local traders and farmers.

Second Phase (1984-1991)

The Agencies that embarked on access and rural road construction and maintenance – the state government and Ministry of Works and Housing for the access roads (State trunk roads) and inter-local government roads; the Rural Works Unit of the Ministry of Local Government, the Local Government Authorities and the various communities for the intra-local Government and communal roads-in the previous era of this study, did same in the current era. However, the Task Force on Road Construction and Maintenance, in line with the prevailing spirit of Task Force Approach to rural development was established to complement the activities of the Ministry of Works.²²

Government awarded contracts for construction and rehabilitation of the state roads. However, the Highway Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport carried out routine maintenance on these roads. Early in this period, that is, from January 1984 to the first quarter of 1986, Government awarded contracts for the reconstruction of the following five road projects at the respective costs and for the specified reasons.

- i. Achi-Inyi – Ufuma Road (17km) the contract consisted of road works and two bridges at a projected cost of ₦2.2m. The bridge across the Mamu River was already completed by the end of 1986.
- ii. Ogidi-Abatete-Oraukwu-Abatete-Ideani-Alor Road (28km) the cost of constructing this road network which would open up large area of dense rural population was put at ₦12.9m.
- iii. Umunze-Owerre-Ezukala Road (15km). The value of the contract was ₦7m and work on it was nearing completion by the last quarter of 1986.
- iv. 9th Mile corner-Oghe-Olor-Omor Road (56km). This vital road which would facilitate evacuation of food from a main food producing area was undertaken at a cost of ₦19.62m.
- v. Abakpa Nike – Ugwuogo-Opi-Nsukka Road 52km. This stretch of road was another highly-rated project which was expected to gulp more than ₦12m. About half of the project had been completed by the middle of 1986. The import of this road lay in the fact that it would provide a short and easy link between the University town of Nsukka and the state capital.²³

Within this period also, the state government instituted the Rural Road Rehabilitation Programme (RRRP) through which it galvanized Local Government Authorities to work in partnership with the various communities to rehabilitate rural roads in the state. Twenty-two out of the Twenty-three local Government Authorities and the various communities did One hundred and forty-eight (148) road projects of a total length of 1,872.8kms. Out of these, three road projects, 70km length were tarred roads while the rest were earth surfaced and graded roads. The contributions of the local people by way of

provision of manual labour, materials like cement, aggregate sand and crushed rock, and timber for bailey bridges deserve commendation.²⁴

The Anambra Imo River Basin Development Authority (AIRBDA) and Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) also had mandate to engage in rural road maintenance and construction. These Agencies executed independent projects and complemented each other. The road projects they executed were few and far-in-between or seem to be connected with their project sites. One could count on the fingertips the number of road projects done by these agencies, The ADP initiated seven road projects, the most significant of which was the Aguleri - Aguleri-Otu (fifteen kilometer) road which it constructed in collaboration with the Task Force on Road Construction and Maintenance while the AIRBDA roads were mainly those that lead to its major project sites – Omor for the Lower Anambra Irrigation Project (LAIP) and Ikem in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area for its Minor Irrigation Project located in the town and the grading of Awka-Mgbakwu road for its project at Mgbakwu.²⁵

With the take-off of Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) operations in the country in 1986, rural development in the state moved on a higher gear. Government established Task Forces in order to ensure speedy and effective completion of projects. The Task Force on Rural Roads Construction and Maintenance, later the Roads Division of the Rural Development Authority, which was supervised by the state supervisory body of DFRRI, the Rural Development Agency was set up. The Task Force on Rural Road Construction and Maintenance headed by Lt. Col. Otanigbagbe had the following objectives:

- to develop and maintain a good network of roads in the state, all year round;
- to develop new link roads as well as rehabilitate and increase the level of service of existing roads for rapid development of rural areas and easy evacuation of agricultural produce;
- to develop and maintain an efficient organization at minimal cost with sufficient expertise to handle construction works;
- to create a forum to integrate the populace in effective joint participation in the execution of government projects;
- to mobilize community effort, social clubs and humanitarian organizations as potential assets in the construction of roads;
- to collaborate with the Ministry of Works, lands and transport and the different local governments in the state to ensure complementarity in functions and responsibility in order to achieve common government objectives.²⁶

The Task Force approach was, indeed, a novel idea conceived to involve the communities in the choice of projects to be executed and galvanize their efforts for effective delivery. The choice of any road to be rehabilitated or maintained came from the communities concerned who also made their contributions which could be in form of cash or in kind. Contributions in kind could be in the provision of manual labour, laterite, aggregate sand and crushed rock, timbers for Bailey bridge, the feeding and housing of the plant operators and fuelling of the plant and equipment.²⁷

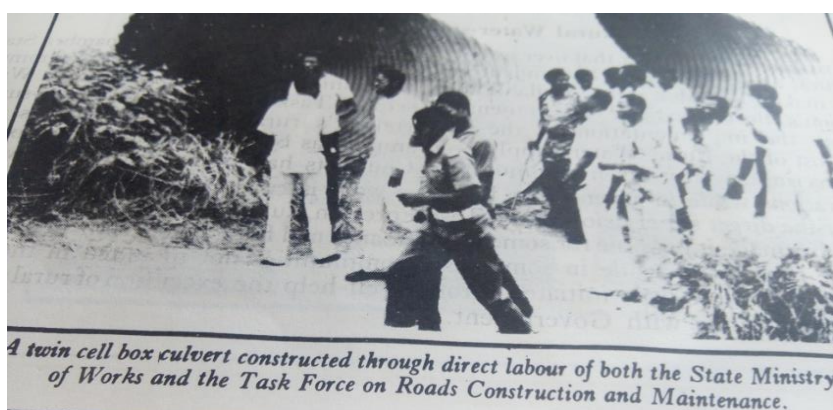


Plate 1: The Governor, Group Captain Sampson EmekaOmeruah and the Chairman, Task Force on Road Construction, Col. Otanigbade, inspecting the Twin cell box culvert constructed through direct labour of both the state Ministry of Works and the Task Force on Roads Construction and Maintenance. **Source:** ANS, "Development Projects, 1987," 20

The Task Force, on its part, provided equipment, technical personnel and some fund. For its effective operation, the Task Force took over the construction and plant equipment of the Ministry of Works. It is on record that the Task Force recorded significant achievements within the period of its operation. It completed Forty-one earth road projects, nine Bailey Bridges, a twin cell box culvert while work was on-going on nine earth road projects and six Bailey Bridges.²⁸

With the dissolution of the Task Force on Rural Roads Construction and Maintenance and that of Rural Water Supply and their subsequent fusion into the Rural Development Authority (RDA) on September 29, 1987, the Roads Division of the RDA took over the task of rural road construction and maintenance. The Authority was funded jointly by the state Government and DFRRRI. In the Phase I of the road projects, the RDA constructed twenty-one road projects of 202km length for DFRRRI, prominent amongst which were Amansea-Ebenebe-Ugbenu-Awba Ofemili, Nenwe-Uduma-Mpu-Okpanku, Umuaga-Udi, Nkwoagu-Onuebonoyiechara Roads. DFRRRI also sponsored the Local Governments to construct and maintain rural feeder roads. These roads were inspected by the Presidential Monitoring Team (PMT) on DFRRRI roads led by Air Vice-Marshall Usman Muazu. The team carried out its task from May to August, 1988. The exercise lasted this long due to the dual exercise of monitoring both DFRRRI sponsored roads and community sponsored roads. In the two exercises, the state DFRRRI presented for inspection, a total of 4,259.7km of roads as follows:

- (1) 1,056.3km constructed with DFRRRI fund
- (2) 3,263.4kms constructed with community fund
- (3) 8 bailey and 3 concrete bridges and 190 culverts

During its operation, the PMT was able to measure 960.5km of the DFRRRI constructed roads, leaving 105.8km uninspected owing to adverse terrain occasioned by unfavourable weather conditions while a total of 121km of inspected roads were rejected for not meeting DFRRRI specifications. Despite the foregoing, the Monitoring Team scored the State DFRRRI 84.2 per cent.²⁹ The figure of the roads presented to the PMT is quite instructive. It shows a preponderance of community-constructed road projects over those sponsored by DFRRRI. However, Government attempted to explain away this state of affairs by arguing that the designation of such roads as 'community-constructed roads' did not mean that the state DFRRRI did not make any input towards their construction. It posited that the state DFRRRI participated in those projects through the provision of input and these were of great significance in the successful completion of the projects. It is worthy of note that the Local Governments in partnership with the various communities embarked on lateriting (sic), grading rural roads and the construction of culverts. Few examples could be cited. In 1989, twelve of such road projects measuring 186kms were done in Nnewi LGA while Ikwo LGA, in the same year, did six road projects of 117kms and constructed Thirty-six culverts.³⁰

The state government did not rest on its oars in the effort to provide access roads to the rural areas. In the 1989 financial year, it allocated ₦29.59m to the Land transport sector.³¹ Out of this amount, ₦12.4m was intended to complement the effort of DFRRRI and the communities in the construction of new roads through the State's Rural Development Authority. Part of this amount went into the maintenance of rural roads and the construction of the Anambra River Bridge. The sum of ₦10.5m was committed to the improvement of the following roads as a way of enriching the quality of life in the rural parts of the state:

- (a) Amechi – Amodu – Agbani Road;
- (b) Achi – Inyi – Ufuma Road
- (c) 9th mile corner – Oghe-Olo-Omor Roads
- (d) Abakaliki Ring Road
- (e) Ukehe-Aku-Nkpologu Road

- (f) EnugwuUkwu – Nimo-Ichida Road
- (g) Ossomari-Ogwu-Ikpele Road.³²

There was a continuous increase in Government's allocation of funds for the development of roads. Both in allocation of funds and in actual expenditure, Land transport sector occupied a prime position in government's development endeavours. By the 1990 Budget, the highest allocation of ₦32.8m was made to the sector. This amount represents 30 percent of the total capital fund and placed the sector in the first position in the 1990 capital programme. The rural road programme got ₦10.08m out of this allocation or 4.57 per cent of the total capital estimates. But despite the enormous expenditure made on the state roads, not much appeared to be achieved. The aggregate length of roads constructed pales into insignificance when compared with the amount of money expended. Government would want us to believe that this was because of the difficult terrain over which some of these roads pass, most of which were erosion prone, undulating hills and escarpments.³³ This does not, however, obviate the fact that the cost of most of the contracts for the road projects may have been inflated.

As could be gleaned from the foregoing analysis, there was a quantum increase in the number and length of road projects undertaken within this period. The Government made fervent effort to construct and maintain the state roads. Of great significance was the construction of a bridge across the Anambra River. That bridge helped to integrate and link communities west of the Anambra River with the rest of the state, gave the people a sense of belonging and made possible the easy evacuation of the agricultural products of the area.³⁴

Under the DFRRI projects, the local people were properly galvanized and mobilized to initiate road projects. The explanation for this may not be unconnected with the mass mobilization approach to rural development adopted by the DFRRI and the effect of the Mass Mobilization on self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) programme adopted by the Federal Government. But it deserves to be known if these roads were worth the effort, commensurate with the amount expended on them and appropriate in addressing rural transport problems in the State.

A dispassionate assessment of the DFRRI roads would tend to suggest that they were of questionable quality. Allied to this was the fact that the communal and feeder roads were earth surfaced and asphalt roads without side drainages. These were inappropriate and unsuitable for the environment and climatic conditions in the state. The state experiences torrential and prolonged rains that made the roads susceptible to rill and gully erosions. No wonder the roads were easily washed away by rain at the onset of the rainy season and the deep gullies developed on the road pavements. Second, the quality and quantity of roads pale to insignificance when compared with the cost. Njoku affirms this as he wrote thus of DFRRI projects, "... gulped colossal amount of money out of tune with even what was claimed to have been achieved."³⁵

Concluding Remarks

This paper demonstrates that the development of rural roads caught the interest of government, development agencies, and the people over the years. These stakeholders played important role in providing access roads and improving the conditions of communal roads in the state. These were in recognition of the invaluable role of the roads to rural development and overall economy of the state. It shows that synergy in the activities of these stakeholders in achieving the stated goals. No doubt, commendable progress was made. However, these efforts were fraught with several challenges that tended to blunt the achievements. Consequently, the problems of inadequacy of rural road network were easily noticeable. The present situation in which roads in parts of the rural areas of what constitute the state would be seen in bright pictures could be attributed to increased government attention to development of rural roads engendered by states creation in the country since 1991, which tended to constrict the spatial dimension of states and cast in bold relief the problems of rural and access roads. Policy makers and politicians see its development as key to populism and electoral successes.

Endnotes

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