



# The Role of Government in Entrepreneurship Development in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

*This study aims to examine the role of government in entrepreneurship development in Nigeria. The paper adopts Narrative Textual Case Study (NTCS) methodology which involves relying on existing literature on entrepreneurship as a concept, economic growth and the relevant government policies that were adopted and still being used to enhance entrepreneurship development. The paper has been able to develop a frame work that shows the interacting relationship between supportive government policy to entrepreneurship development and its effect on poverty and hunger. The paper has discovered that, despite all the efforts put in by government to achieve entrepreneurship development, the result has been failure, thus resulting to high unemployment, low economic growth, increase in poverty and hunger. The researcher upon review of relevant works discovered that, lack of infrastructure; poor programme design, improper implementation, and corruption are the factors responsible for this dismay situation. It therefore recommends a declaration of state of emergency on infrastructure, fight against corruption and a total overhaul of the existing government programs on entrepreneurship development*

**Key words:** *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship development, Role of Government, Government policy*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is an emerging concept in business, a field of study and as we; as general human activity. According to Schumpeter, (1934), entrepreneurship is an effective strategy for overcoming unemployment, reducing poverty and promoting general economic development.

With globalization, entrepreneurship seems to be taken the centre stage in the global economy.

Naude (2011) has advanced three reasons for this recent trend; Firstly innovative entrepreneurial revolution is responsible for the rapid growth emerging economies like China, India, Brazil, Singapore, Indonesia etc. Secondly, small scale entrepreneurial economy of recent has taken over the large business of the old managed economics in the 1970s and 1980s up to even year 2000. Lastly, in developing economies where reliance is placed so much on donor support, the supporting agencies are encouraging more of private sector participation through development cooperation. Naude (2011) therefore had drawn the conclusion that, all economies whether developing or underdeveloped all require entrepreneurship development to achieve economic growth, employment generation and sustainable development.

The term entrepreneurial development has therefore been defined in various dimensions (Ndechukwu, 2001). Entrepreneurship Development refers to the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution-building programmes. It enlarges the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which new ventures are created. This helps in boosting employment generation and economic development. Entrepreneurial development 'focuses on the individual who wishes to start or expand a business. Furthermore, entrepreneurship development concentrates more on growth potential and innovation. Essentially this means the acquisition of skills that will enable an entrepreneur to function appropriately and adequately in terms; Attaining present result based on previous decisions and planning for the future, based on present circumstance; Maintaining and developing the organized capability which makes achievement possible, and Coordinating the specialist functions that should enable a firm to perform the technical task in marketing, personnel, research and



development, manufacturing, finance and control, especially in the face of changing technology and dynamic industry trend. To perform these functions, the entrepreneurial development process, procedures and skill acquisition must entrench certain skills.

The generally held view that entrepreneurship development promotes employment generation and sustainable development is also applicable to Nigeria. Several studies carried out by scholars including empirical ones attest to this position, Thaddeus (2012) and Abimbola and Agboola (2011).

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In line with this held view, successive government in Nigeria has evolved policies and programmes geared towards enhancing economic growth, reducing unemployment and achieve sustainable development through entrepreneurship development. Most of these policies were designed to promote the activities of Small and Medium Entrepreneurships (SMEs) over the past four decades.

Despite all these efforts by government (role) recent statistics has shown that, the problem have remained unresolved, unemployment rate in Nigeria is still high (increased to 14.2 percent in 2016 from 10.4 percent a year earlier) at a fast growing national population estimated to be 185.99m (National Bureau of statistic (NDS) 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter report 2016. The poverty rate is put at 62.6% while the per capita income is \$1, 1280 (UNDP Human Development Index Report, 2016). These statistics are obvious indicators of slow economic growth, low job creation and less sustainable development. The underlining question therefore is, what is responsible for the failure of all these policies and programmes designed and implemented by previous and current public leadership from achieving the desired result? Is it due to faulty design of the programmes or poor funding or improper implementation? This study is therefore designed to investigate this problem.

### 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i) Examine the contribution of Entrepreneurship development to economic growth
- ii) To identify the role of government in promoting entrepreneurship development
- iii) To determine the extent of success of such policies and programmes.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Framework

### Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurship Development

Entrepreneurship as a concept is defined by Tijani - Alaniye (2004) 'as the process of increasing the supply of entrepreneurs or adding to the stock of existing small, medium and by enterprises available to a country by creating and promoting many capable entrepreneurs, who can successfully run innovative enterprises, nurture them to growth, and sustain them with the view of achieving broad socio-economic development'.

On the other hand, the term entrepreneurial development has therefore been defined in various dimensions (Ndechukwu, 2001). Entrepreneurship Development refers to the process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and institution-building programmes. It enlarges the base of entrepreneurs in order to hasten the pace at which new ventures are created. This helps in boosting employment generation and economic development. Entrepreneurial development 'focuses on the individual who wishes to start or expand a business. Furthermore, entrepreneurship development concentrates more on growth potential and innovation

There are several others definitions of by other scholars, however, the definitions above can be summarized into 3 ways or elements; the ability to be innovative, the ability to take risks (operate in uncertainty) and identifying new opportunities or ventures. These three elements constitute the attributes of an entrepreneur. According to Ubong (2013), entrepreneurship is increasingly being recognized as a primary engine for economic growth and development.

The concept revolve around identifying opportunities, tapping them and successfully implementing them in order to achieve economic benefits which can lead to economic growth. This is the reason why government show so much interest in the development of this phenomenon since the whole concept of governance is to facilitate economic growth and development of the country.

### Innovativeness

Innovativeness as an element of entrepreneurship was first presented by Schumpeter in 1934 through his "Theory of economic development". The European Union has recommended innovation as a strategic driver for economic growth and development (Mazzuto, 2013). In the same line, Ajagbe and Ismail (2013) have argued that innovation has become an indispensable tool for economic development



whether such economy is developing or is already developed. Innovative based business promotes job creation. It can also develop new markets and enhance technological advancement.

The development of SMEs is hinged on how creative the entrepreneur is, innovation can be in form of product development, marketing or sound managerial decisions. Whichever line it takes, innovation contributes greatly to the development of an entrepreneur. It is one element every entrepreneur must have.

### **Risk Taking**

Taking risk is part of business; the fear of risk is the failure of a business. Risk taking is defined as the practice of doing things that have uncertainty result for a reward ( Stewart and Roth, 2001).The economic theory advanced by Cantillon in 1931 exposed the concept of risk and uncertainty in entrepreneurship literature. On the strength of Cantillon's work, Isago (2012) canvassed the distinguishing element between an entrepreneur and an employee to be the ability to take risk and endure uncertainty in business. A risk taker is a person who pursues a new venture or a business decision with the hope of succeeding not minding the odds. Such a person or entrepreneur when he succeeds employs others to assist in the expansion of the business, thus leading to economic growth and sustainable development.

### **Identifying new ventures or Opportunities**

A person's ability to identify a new venture that is marketable and profitable makes him a great entrepreneur. It is actually a skill; such skills can be developed out of one's ingenuity or creativity or due to exposure or previous training. It may also come out of one's desire to be his own boss or to be independent. When such idea or initiative materializes and grow into a successful business, it then employs more people, create wealth and contribute to economic growth and development.

This skill of identifying new ventures has to be properly managed in such a creative manner that the business is profitable and sustainable.

### **THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Globally, governments of several countries have realized the importance of entrepreneurship and therefore establish policies and programmes aimed at advancing entrepreneurship development in their communities (Gangi and Timan, 2013). The

role of government essentially includes deployment of resources (both human and material) to achieve entrepreneurship development, such resources include; providing a conducive business environment for upcoming and existing entrepreneurs, legislation to regulate smooth running of SMEs, providing infrastructural development and proper funding of such policies. According to Pals (2006), 'there is a need for government policies as they relate to entrepreneurship to be successfully implemented irrespective of which administration is in power in order to achieve the goals of economic growth which is often times is always lacking'.

The role of Government role can therefore be explained to include any course of action carried out with the aim of regulating and implementing good strategies for the welfare SMEs including proper funding. This therefore means that supportive government roles must be designed to promote entrepreneurship development by providing a conducive business environment.

According to Oni (2012), government of most countries particularly developing countries have invested so much effort and resources in policies intended to uplift entrepreneurship. A good example of such countries is China, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and Nigeria. China has achieved her feat in industrialization by investing heavily in entrepreneurship, same for Brazil and Malaysia, Saudi Arabia in year 2010 launched a 10-year entrepreneurship programme and innovation (Salem, 2014). The design of the Saudi programme was to put their country at par with high economic competitive countries globally.

In Malaysia, 'technology entrepreneurship' was adopted as a model to fast track progress. The government funded several technologies driven projects for private business persons. The government was also involved in the establishment of venture capital companies with the sole aim of encouraging investment in such high growth firms due to the fact that, they (entrepreneurs) were incapacitated at the early stage of raising their own business capital.

Conceptually it can be concluded that a government policy or programmes on entrepreneurship development when properly funded and implemented can lead to entrepreneurship development which will bear fruits of Economic growth, employment generation, and sustainable development, resulting to less poverty and hunger.



This can be reflected in the following frame work:

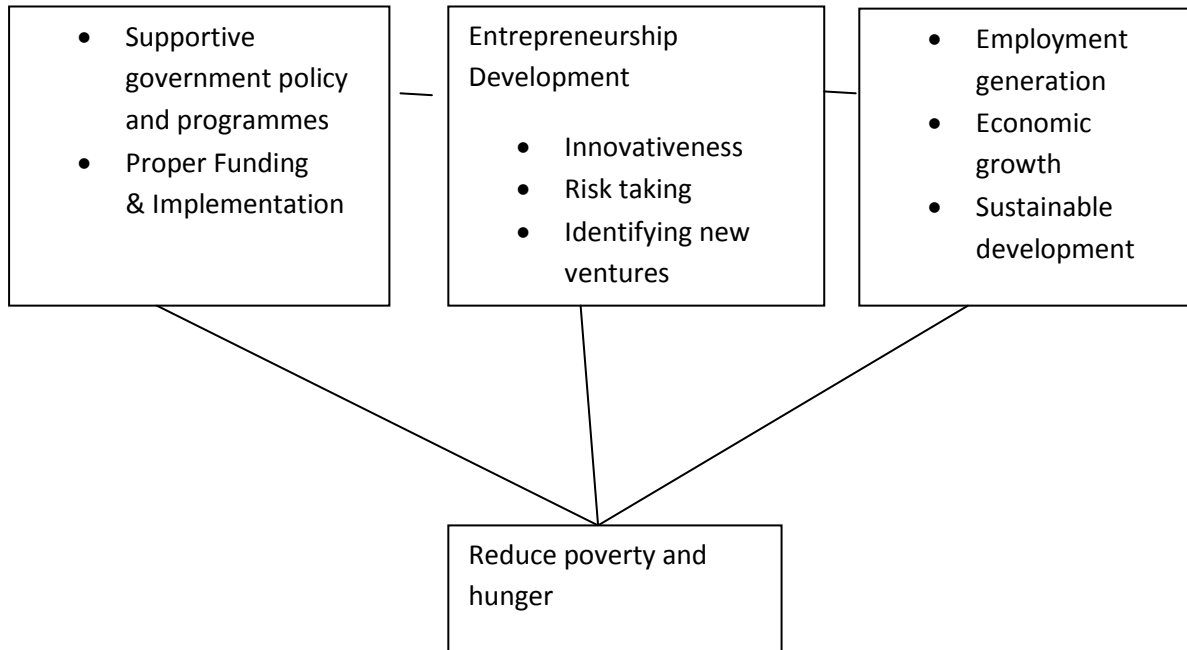


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework developed by the researcher based neoclassical approach theory.

### Empirical Review

The empirical works on the role of government on entrepreneurship development is generally scarce; however, the following works are closely related:

Carter and Wilton (2008), empirically investigated the effect of entrepreneurship on economic growth and development at the country level. It also compares the relationship between entrepreneurship development and economic growth in both high income and low income nations. The study further investigated whether the presence of 'growth oriented entrepreneur' contributes more to economic growth than the general entrepreneurial activity. The result suggested that, entrepreneurship does not have much effect on the economic growth on low-income nations, as compared to high income ones. It argued that, growth oriented entrepreneurship contribute strongly to economic growth of high income nations.

Ogunlela, (2012) assessed the impact of the government entrepreneurship programmes of the NDE on graduate employment and unemployment in Kaduna State of Nigeria. The study relied on oral interview of NDE personnel and NDE brochures, annual reports, handbooks and other documentary sources for its data. The study revealed that while graduates who benefited from the training programmes under the different NDE schemes were

normally supposed to be placed on attachment, what obtained was that in some cases, graduates trained were not placed on attachment. The study also revealed that the impact of the NDE in generating graduate employment in Kaduna State was, at best, modest.

Amire and Ngwama, (2015) examined the contributions of the NDE as a government policy in facilitating youth employment through skill development and job creation in Lagos State, Nigeria between 2005 and 2011. To collect data for the study, unstructured interview was carried out with officials and heads of department at the NDE zonal offices in Lagos State. Secondary data were collected from NDE annual reports, periodicals, journals, etc. The findings of the study revealed that between 2005 and 2012, 4188 graduates registered with the job centre units of the NDE in Lagos and out of this number, 341 were employed; that the NDE as an institution had contributed in no small measure in developing vocational skills, training and creating jobs for the unemployed within their capacity. The study however submitted that the pace of the NDE was slow in meeting the demands for skills development among graduates in Nigeria. Consequently, the study recommends that the government develop more institutional capacity to tackle the issue of unemployment in the country and that the NDE update its data bank as the lack of



current data is a serious defect on its operations – the availability of current data will make for proper planning.

### III. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK The Refugee Effect

This process of unemployment fast-tracking entrepreneurship activity has been termed a “refugee effect”. This remarkable view dates back at least to Oxenfeldt (1943), who pointed out that individuals confronted with unemployment and low prospects for wage employment often turn to self-employment as a viable alternative. This observation was also an extension of Knight’s view that individuals make a decision among three states – unemployment, self-employment and employment. The simple theory of income choice lends credence to refugee effect by suggesting that increased unemployment will lead to an increase in startup business activity on the grounds that the opportunity cost of not starting a firm has decreased (Evans and Leighton, 1990; and Blanchflower and Meyer, 1994). Similarly, Picot et al. (1998) and Pfeiffer and Reize (2000) observe that new firms hire the needed employees to work for them, thus helping to reduce the level of unemployment in the society. Evans and Leighton (1990) found that unemployment is positively associated with greater propensity to start a new firm. Many other studies established that greater unemployment serves as a catalyst for startup activity (Reynolds, Miller and Makai, 1995; Reynolds, Storey and Westhead, 1994).

### The Schumpeter Effect

The process of entrepreneurship activity reducing unemployment situation in the economy is termed “Schumpeter effect”. Garofoli (1994) and Audretsch and Fritsch (1994) in their separate studies found that unemployment is negatively related to new-firm startups, that is, as new businesses are established employability is stimulated and unemployment reduces substantially. In the same vein, Lucas (1978) and Jovanovic (1982) note that high unemployment in the society is associated with a low degree of entrepreneurial activities, that is, where propensity to set up enterprises is low; the rate of unemployment would be very high. The implication of the above assertions is that those who are unemployed tend to remain so because they possess lower endowments of human capital and entrepreneurial talents required to start and sustain new firms to keep them going. A low rate of entrepreneurship culture and skills in any society may be a consequence of the low economic growth, which also reflects higher

levels of unemployment (Audretsch, 1995, Oladele, P. O. et al, 2011).

### The Neoclassical Approach

Proponents of the neoclassical approach to the business-enabling environment assume that most factor markets work reasonably well without government intervention if property rights and competition are guaranteed. Such interventions are in most cases considered less efficient than market-based solutions, and it is stressed that many government interventions in fact hamper private sector development. Measures to improve the business-enabling environment consequently focus on deregulation and the good functioning of markets, with only a limited role assigned to the public sector in a few areas where market failure is most obvious. Within the neoclassical approach a distinction could be drawn between “regulatory business environment” and the “investment climate”. Proponents of this approach do not take characteristics and motives of the entrepreneur into account. Instead, the distinguishing attribute of informal firms is non-registration. It is assumed that the informal economy is comprised of enterprises that operate informally because the costs, time and effort of formal registration are too high (see de Soto 1989; and Palmade & Anayiotos 2005).

The “regulatory business environment” covers regulations that immediately affect businesses through the costs of compliance. These are composed of direct costs, such as license fees, transactions. The latter include transaction costs arising from the time that has to be spent in obtaining a licence as well as increasing costs stemming from inappropriate government regulations that make contract enforcement or the hiring and firing of workers unnecessarily complicated and costly. The costs of the regulatory business environment are most prominently analyzed in the Doing Business series published by World Bank/IFC on an annual basis since 2004. The 2007 edition (World Bank/IFC 2007) measures the costs and time associated with complying with 10 types of regulations: starting a business, employing workers, getting credit, enforcing contracts, closing a business, registering property, dealing with licences, protecting investors, paying taxes, and trading across borders. The emphasis on easing regulations and providing property rights was inspired by the works of de Soto (1989, 2000) as well as by reform experiences in Eastern Europe. Some of the most influential proponents of the regulatory business environment claim that such



reforms are not only appropriate to unleash private sector development and growth but that they immediately benefit the poor more than proportionally because “heavy regulation and weak property rights exclude the poor from doing business” (see World Bank/IFC 2005; Klein & Hadjimichael 2003; Klein 2006; and Klapper 2006).

This theory encapsulates the main objective of this study, which is basically on the role of government in developing entrepreneurship in Nigeria and particularly the challenges. Unlike the refugee effect and Schumpeter's theory that deals essentially with the role of entrepreneur and how the concept develops, this theory identifies ease of doing and external challenges like weak infrastructure base and defects in government actions as some of the constraints to entrepreneurship development. The theory emphasizes that extensive government regulations hamper the formation, registration and growth of private enterprises and create numerous opportunities for rent-seeking bureaucrats to extract bribes, thereby increasing corruption significantly.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this research is Narrative-Textual Case Study (NTCS), this is a social science-oriented methodology that is usually adopted for research in cases of sustainable development. Under this method, secondary data is sourced, reviewed and analysed. The researcher here relied on data from secondary sources like journal articles, government gazette, publications, CBN reports and other government bulletins and interactions with people. The collated literature is reviewed and analysed.

#### V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

##### Government Policies and Programmes Anchored by Nigerian Government for Entrepreneurship Development

Entrepreneurial development has been conceived by successive governments in Nigeria as a programme of activities to enhance the knowledge, skill, behaviour and attitudes of individuals and groups to assume the role of entrepreneurs. In this regard the Federal Government of Nigeria has adopted several strategies and policies towards entrepreneurial development, by establishing institutions and agencies, which provide variety of support services to entrepreneurs. Some of these institutions and agencies include; Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, Nigeria Development Bank, Central Bank of Nigeria Agricultural credit scheme, Anchor

Borrowers Scheme for Rice, Maize, sorghum and irrigation farming, Small and medium enterprises equity investment scheme (SMIEIS), Peoples Bank of Nigeria, Micro-Finance Bank scheme, Community Banks, The National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Small and Medium Entrepreneur Development Agency (SMEDAN), Entrepreneurship Development Centers including the CBN facilitated one in each of the six geopolitical zones and in Educational institutions, Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWin), Establishment of Federal Universities of Agriculture, technology and other federal government owned tertiary institutions that promote skills acquisition, Nigeria Industrial Development Bank, Nigeria Bank for commerce and industry among many others.

These programmes were established to provide training, skills, financial assistance and relevant information for entrepreneurs to benefit from thus attempting to remove the constraints they face and expand the frontiers of opportunities available to them.

Going by the programmes and policies outlined here above, it is clear that successive governments in Nigeria made serious efforts towards entrepreneurship development, but the biting question therefore is what went wrong? Why is unemployment still prevalent? Why is poverty and hunger still high? Why the low economic growth?

The first noticeable problem is the inability of the designers of these programmes to distinguish between informal sector operators and the entrepreneurs who are basically SME operators. They were lumped together hence the inability to customize packages to fit their respective unique operations (Ihugba, Odii and Njoku, 2014).

The second factor is relating to environmental, socio economic, political and cultural factors like bad governance, insecurity and harmful cultural practices. (Ihugba, et al, 2014)

The third factor is the high cost of doing business in Nigeria. According to the ‘Doing Business Report’ (2015), Nigeria ranks near the bottom in “ease of doing business” (170 out of 189 countries), also the World Bank report (2016) on “An Assessment of the Investment Climate in Nigeria” ranked power supply or electricity as the most severe constraints to entrepreneurship development in Nigeria followed by corruption, access to finance, political governance, tax rate and administration, competition from informal firms, access to land, transportation, tax administration, trade regulation, business permits, crime and



disorder, skilled labour, courts, access to information communication and technology and labour regulation. These all add up to the constraints towards entrepreneurship development in Nigeria.

The fourth factor is lack of national spread in the implementation of some of the programme. A case for reference is the of SMIEIS programme, out of the N42 billion invested in SMIEIS programmes as at 2009, Lagos state alone benefitted 42.25% (Central Bank of Nigeria Report, 2009). The Bank of Industry (BOI) is suffering the same fate, however in their own case they concentrate more on big industries as against SMEs.

The fifth factor is the over concentration of these programmes in the urban centres as against rural areas. These practices deny the SMEs in the rural areas access to these opportunities. For example, the Micro-Finance Banks are concentrated in urban centres even though it is designed to serve entrepreneurs in the rural communities (Anyadike, Emeh and Ukah, 2012).

The sixth factor is the lack of awareness of some of the programmes. The activities of SMEDAN in entrepreneurial development remains unknown to most entrepreneurs so also is the Nigerian Agricultural cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) which has limited reach, over 80% the target beneficiaries do not have access to their services.

The seventh factor is the absence of 'uptakers' programmes for beneficiaries to access requisite practical training and startup capital or resources. For example, the Entrepreneurship Development Centers (EDCs) are training students and providing skills for would be entrepreneurs but there is absence of a follow up programme to connect the students to industrial centers to access practical training or to connect them to relevant financial institutions to enable them access funds for takeoff of their businesses after the training (Abimbola and Agboola, 2013).

Finally, the most dangerous of all is corruption. The Transparency International's 2017 corruption perception index puts Nigeria at 136<sup>th</sup> position out of 176 countries in the world. This means, 2.6 out of 10 points or 26%. Most of the funds meant genuinely for entrepreneurs were diverted to private use. In some instances unmerited persons or companies are the ones that benefit at the instance of the appropriate entrepreneurs. Sometimes, politicians or leaders meddle into the activities of these agencies thereby obstructing them from doing their responsibilities professionally.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The efforts made by successive governments towards entrepreneurship development have not yielded the desired results, one of the reasons is faulty design of some of the programmes, the other is poor implementation of programme and lack of awareness, why other factors remaining are inefficiency and corruption.

In overcoming these challenges, it is recommended that;

- (i) The Federal Government should declare a state of emergency on infrastructure and corruption in Nigeria, without the negative effect of these two factors addressed, entrepreneurship development in Nigeria will be difficult to achieve.
- (ii) In designing further programmes, government should identify the difference between informal sector operators and genuine entrepreneurs. This will help mainstream programming
- (iii) More awareness should be created for policies and programmes that have limited reach, especially in the rural areas so that more entrepreneurs will become informed and benefit.
- (iv) The fight against corruption should be intensified. It must be fight to finish, the current efforts of the Federal government should be sustained, but most importantly, the concept of "Catch them Young" should be embraced to educate the younger ones in primary and secondary schools the dangers of corruption through formation of Anti-corruption Clubs as capacity building units.
- (v) Entrepreneurship education should be made compulsory for all youths and particularly in our primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.
- (vi) Some of the programmes still running like BOI, SMEDAN, Micro Finance banks framework should be overhauled so that the noticeable shortcomings will be corrected.
- (vii) The Government policies and programmes should be rural based driven so that the unreached will be reached, so that rural community life will be enhanced.

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