



Rural-urban Migration and the Underdevelopment in Selected Rural Communities in Imo State, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between authors AO-N and PC. Author AO-N designed the study, wrote the protocol and supervised the work. Author PC performed the statistical analysis of the study. Author PC wrote the first draft of the manuscript and managed the literature searches. Author AO-N edited the manuscript. The two authors jointly approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Rural-urban migration is a phenomenon that most developing nations of the world are experiencing due to the gross neglect of the rural areas. In Nigeria, the issue of rural-urban migration is quite alarming owing to the discriminatory centralization of facilities in the cities as well as widening income gap between the urban and rural areas. In fact this skewed developmental process that favours the urban centers has remained the major problem causing the underdevelopment of the rural areas. The overall objective of the study is to examine the effect of rural-urban migration in the underdevelopment of selected rural communities in Imo state, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to; determine the causes of rural-urban migration in the selected communities; determine the age bracket at which people mostly migrate to cities; find out the sex mostly involved in out-migration and find out the consequences of out-migration in the underdevelopment of the areas. In carrying out the study, survey research design was employed in which interview and questionnaire were used. One hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were distributed to respondents drawn from the three communities selected from the three geo-political zones in Imo state. Out of this

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number, one hundred and thirty copies were returned and used for analysis. For the data analysis, frequency distribution tables and percentages were used. The findings showed among others that; rural-urban migration is caused due to low employment opportunities in the rural areas; inadequate provision of social infrastructure in the rural areas and to escape from the unattractive/dull nature of rural areas. Secondly, people between the ages of 21-26,15-20 and 33-38 years respectively mostly migrate to cities; males are more prone to rural-urban migration than females; and finally, that out-migration has led to loss of local manpower, fall in agricultural productivity, degeneration of indigenous skill etc. In order to reduce the trend of rural-urban migration, we recommend the following that; government should decentralize its developmental projects and programmes in order to accommodate the rural areas, government should make agriculture attractive for rural dwellers so that they could see it as a profitable occupation, there should be economic incentives to promote adaptation of indigenous skills and technologies in the rural areas etc.

Keywords: Rural-urban migration; underdevelopment; infrastructure; out-migration; rural communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

In most developing countries of the world especially in Africa, the mass influx of rural people into the urban centers is quite alarming. In Africa, the concept of rural-urban migration gained prominence in the 1960's when most of the African countries gained their independence. With the attainment of self government by most African nations, there was discriminatory centralization of facilities in the cities and a widening income gap between the urban and rural areas. Due to limited rural socio-economic development, rural-urban migration became a norm [1].

In Nigeria, one of the objectives of her economic policy is to bridge the gap between the urban areas and their rural counterpart. However, the stark reality on ground suggests that previous and present Nigerian governments have done little to actually engender a balanced socio-economic development of the urban and rural areas. Thus, rural-urban migration entails the movement of people from rural to urban areas, usually in search of better socio-economic conditions such as good jobs, quality education, infrastructural development, business opportunities or better living conditions among others.

For people to migrate there is the tendency for such people to be dissatisfied with current state of affairs at home. The forces that tend to propel the ruralites to emigrate in their numbers have been referred to as "push factors". There are various rural push factors. As noted, by [2,3] if a country experiences a Green Revolution, the rise in food productivity releases labour for the modern sector and people migrate to the cities. Equally, rural poverty due to land pressure or

natural disasters causes rural migrants to flock to cities [4,5]. On the other hand, there are various urban pull factors like the urban wage increases which attracts workers from the countryside [6]. Also, the attractive nature of urban cities as well as the availability of socio-economic amenities has equally made the cities cynosure of attraction to rural migrants [1]. A critical look at some major cities in Nigeria like Port Harcourt, Kaduna, Kano, Abuja and Lagos would reveal the unprecedented influx of people from the rural country side to these cities. There have been divergent views concerning rural-urban migration. In the development/underdevelopment discourse, there are those that support rural-urban migration argument. Their view is that emigrants remit income, imbibe new ideas and could transfer the required skill to enhance rural development [7-9]. On the other hand, there are those that oppose the rural-urban migration – benefit argument. In their opinion, rural-urban migration tends to have a 'backwash' effect on the socio-economic structure of the rural areas. This is with the apprehension that unbridled rural-urban migration could lead to ghost village [1]. Furthermore, [10] averred that remittance could negatively impact development because it reduces the incentive to work, induce mass migration and lead to a brain drain that produces labour shortage.

The overall objective of this study is therefore to empirically find out how rural-urban migration led to underdevelopment in selected rural communities in Imo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives include to:

- I. Determine the causes of rural urban migration in selected communities
- II. Determine the age bracket at which people mostly migrate to the cities

- III. Find out the sex mostly involved in out-migration
- IV. Find out the consequences of out-migration in the underdevelopment of the areas.

In the discourse concerning the effect of rural-urban migration especially as it pertains to Nigeria as noted earlier, two schools of thought have emerged: - those that see rural-urban migration as a tool for development and those that opined it has simply brought underdevelopment of the rural areas. Using Imo State as a point of reference to this study, similar explanations and assumptions have been advanced but most of these have been based on speculations than on empirical assertions. The justification for this study lies on the empirical validity of the research findings and its potentials to extend the frontier of knowledge.

From the policy perspective, the research provides research-based data that will help in making policies aimed at checking rural-urban migration. This will invariably help to improve the development of the rural communities in Imo State and Nigeria at large. Besides, the study offers great benefits to development scholars, rural sociologists, demographers, international and local development organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the National Population Commission (NPC) and other authorities directly or indirectly concerned with the issue of rural-urban migration.

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Urbanization which is the increasing proportion of people that migrate from rural areas to urban centers has been closely linked to modernization and industrialization. The rate of urbanization in the world is quite astronomical with the United Nations projection that by 2050 64.1% and 85% of developing and developed world respectively will be urbanized [11]. However, in terms of urban growth rate, the situation in developing world is several folds faster than that of the developed. According to [12] in 1960, the 35 countries whose income per capita was less than \$2 a day had an average urbanization rate of 15%. In 2010, the 34 countries with similar incomes had an average rate of 30%. The cities of today's developing world are also much larger with Lagos, Mumbay and Jarkarta having the same population as new York, Paris and London respectively. Dhaka, Kinshasa and Manila are

urban super-giants located in very poor countries [12].

Regionally speaking, Africa is the most rapidly urbanizing continent with an average growth rate at nearly 4% per year over the next 15years, meaning that Africa's share of the world's urban population will increase from 10-17 percent between 2000 and 2015 [13]. In Nigeria, urban growth rate is one of the highest in the world. The National urban growth is put at 11% per annum with some individual cities, especially Lagos growing at a much higher rate than this average [14]. At first, one must look at the core reasons for rural-urban migration in Nigeria. [15] has noted earlier that migration (rural-urban) is basically a reflection of the imbalance in opportunities and life chances which exist between the rural-urban areas. The existing dissatisfying state of affairs in the rural areas are what compel the ruralites to migrate to urban areas and are known as push factors.

The push factors are:

2.1 Inadequate Supply of Social Infrastructure

For many people in Nigeria, life in the rural areas is not adequately supported by the existing life-supporting social amenities like educational facilities (primary schools, secondary schools, vocational and technical schools, adult education, etc), health facilities (hospitals, maternity centers, etc), communication facilities (internet services, Global System for Mobile (GSM), etc), electricity and water supply [16]. For instance, most rural dwellers in Nigeria obtain water from streams, wells, rivers, shallow ponds or rain unlike what obtains in the cities where pipe borne water and bore-hole water supply are significantly provided. [15] Observed that water borne diseases like cholera, dysentery, "typhoid" suffered by the ruralites can be attributed to inadequate supply of clean portable water.

Similarly, electricity supply for lighting, small scale industries, recreation and other uses that is very vital to raising the rural quality of life is equally inadequate or non-existent. With the rural population constituting 51.26% of the total population of Nigeria. [17] estimated that only 34.58% of Nigeria's rural populations have access to electricity. This ugly situation and many others have been the precipitating factors pushing people to the cities.

2.2 Inadequate Supply of Physical Infrastructure

Physical infrastructure in this sense, include transportation facilities (roads, bridges, ferry services, ports), storage facilities (silos, warehouses, cribs, etc), processing facilities, irrigation, flood control and water processing facilities and soil conservation facilities [15].

Generally speaking, development in Nigeria as it concerns the provision of physical infrastructure is skewed to favour the urban areas. Among the rural dwellers in the riverine areas, transportation for instance, still depends largely on dugout canoes or sometimes motorized propellers. Port facilities have been greatly developed in major port towns like Lagos, Warri, Port Harcourt and Calabar. However, these facilities have not been developed for the direct use of rural people but to serve as terminals for international trade. The ruralites who have to make use of rivers often use local communal landing points along creeks or abandoned bases such as Ibiyong, Ikot Abasi, Eket, Itu, etc which were important departure points for primary export produce during the colonial days [15].

2.3 Inadequate Allocation of Institutional Infrastructure

Institutional infrastructure such as credit and financial institutions, agricultural research institutions, agricultural and industrial extension services and marketing services among others are essential for the direct development of the rural areas. It is however, unfortunate that most of these institutional infrastructures especially credit and financial institutions are completely lacking in the rural areas. Rural farmers require credits (loans) from banks to engage in somewhat large- scale farming but the absence of such services or the stress of going to the cities to access the services have left them disenchanted and subsequently enmeshed in subsistence living. To these ruralites, life in the cities remains the only closure to escape the harsh realities of rural life.

2.4 Unbalanced Employment Opportunities

This is one of the crucial reasons why people migrate to cities in Nigeria. According to Todaro in [12] in his labour migration and employment model also propounded the rural-urban wage

differential theory, which opines that the decision to migrate from the rural to the urban area is to achieve high urban pay as compared to the low rural pay. People migrate to cities in search of better job opportunities that will enhance their standard of living. Such opportunities exist in political capitals, industrial and commercial centers in cities.

2.5 Unforeseen Natural and Social Events

Decision to migrate could be spontaneous and strongly related to the disruption of the rural economy. Such spontaneous decision as noted by [18,19] could be as a result of natural disaster like flood, drought, land slide, erosion, earthquake, insect and pest infestation, escape from political instability, rights abuses, communal clashes, family disputes, outbreak of war and other adversities. A case in point in Nigeria is the activities of Boko Haram insurgency where many rural people have been displaced and turned into refugee in their own country. To this effect, many have migrated to the more urban areas for safety.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWRK

Based on the above push factors discussed earlier, the urban-biased theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. The urban-biased theory was advanced by [20] and since then a number of theorists have taken the theory forward, in an effort to understand better the complex interaction that exist between urban and rural populations and development/underdevelopment.

Lipton applied this theory to explain that vulnerability to famine during the 1970s in developing countries was often due to biased government policies, which favoured urban elites and consequently discriminated against those living in the rural areas. In essence, Lipton identified how a structured imbalance of power, away from periphery predominantly rural areas, toward urban political and commercial centers led to an explicit imbalance in resource allocation, and drove an implicit deficit in the field of policy making.

However, for scholar like [21], his theory of urban-biased theory is predicated on the point that prior to becoming structural, the root of much urban bias was primarily attitudinal and influenced by the cultural background and experience of the individual. In essence, policy

makers, academic researchers, economic and political representatives are overwhelmingly educated within urban based educational establishments that support the differential in rural-urban development. In the final analysis, urban-bias theory clearly captures the skewed developmental permutation that favours the urban centers whereas their rural counterparts lavish in poverty and general underdevelopment. This trend thus fuels rural-urban migration.

4. RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Rural-urban migration has been seen as one of the mechanism that has added to the underdevelopment quagmire facing a plethora of developing countries especially in Nigeria. Although it is quite debatable that rural-urban migration through the instrumentality of remittance of money by out-migrants to their relatives has helped the latter to enjoy somewhat better socio-economic livelihood in their rural communities. However, this section provided a nuance perspective to the negative effects of rural-urban migration on the underdevelopment of the rural areas.

Economically, it has been held that rural-urban migration of skilled and the educated from the rural areas deprived those areas of human capital so badly needed for economic development. Sustained growth and development (elimination of poverty) will for a long time remain elusive in the rural areas until they (rural areas) succeed in building, retaining and nurturing the human capital vital for grooming the area. Although scanty documented data exists on the impact of rural brain drain on rural areas, there is no doubt that they are losing on a daily basis sizeable number of her human capital to the urban centers.

[15] has noted that migration from rural into urban areas tend to deplete the agricultural labour force as it is the able bodied young men who usually move. It is instructive to note that rural area is the predominant food and fiber producing sector of the Nigerian society with about 90 percent of the country's food produced by small scale farmers residing there as observed by Global Action on Aging in [22]. With no commensurate substitution of capital in place of the displaced labour, agricultural productivity tends to fall in the source region and thus worsening the already fractured rural sector.

Degeneration of traditional skills and knowledge has also been accentuated by rural-urban migration. Crafts such as pot making, mat making, weaving, bone-setting, trade-medicine, etc has provided a means of livelihood and sustenance to individuals with such skills in the rural areas. These skills could be used to establish small scale industries where other local skills could be harnessed and effectively developed. The effect of out-migration from rural to urban areas has been the degeneration and abandonment of these traditional skills which act as viable developmental options in the long run.

Socio-culturally, rural-urban migration could account for the lost of the cultural identity and heritage of the local people. Culture as that complex whole encompasses the blueprint and social road map for living. In many rural Nigerian communities, there are notable exotic places that have attracted both national and international attention. Specifically, as it relates to cultural tourism, such places like the famous Oguta Lake resort in Oguta and the Legendary Ogbunike Cave in Oguta, Imo State and Enugu state Southeast Nigeria respectively, among others could generate tremendous revenue to the local people and as well project their culture positively. But before this could be done in the first place, enabling local environment that encourage the rural people to stay and promote such cultures should be put in place. In situations where the local guides in such tourists centers migrate to urban areas in search of better employment that will greatly affect that sector adversely. It is instructive to note that no society can develop outside its own culture and the preservation of culture is a sine quo non for sustainable rural development.

Rural-urban migration is also associated to what [1] has termed 'ghost' rural villages. In most rural communities due to the mass influx of youths and able bodied individuals to cities, the area has been left for the elderly and children. Hence, social life has remained dull and unattractive in the rural communities. [23] noted that the departure of adult children has reduced their availability to provide assistance in the daily functioning of their parents' households or personal care for those who become frail or suffer chronic illness.

Lastly, one should remember the crucial role the youths play in providing community security for lives and property. In most Nigerian communities where access to formal law enforcement agency (police) is not available due to its remoteness,

the youth vigilante groups usually fill the security vacuum. As earlier noted the quest for better employment and the fuss about the urban centers as the cynosure of development, a preponderant number of youths usually abandon their villages and the crucial role of securing lives and property of the ruralites.

5. METHODOLOGY

Imo State is one of the five Eastern States in Nigeria created in February 3, 1976 and part of the thirty-six States that made up the Nigerian Federation. It lies within latitude 4° 45'N and 7° 15'N and longitude 6° 50'E and 7° 26'E with an area of around 5,100 Sq km. It is made up of twenty-seven Local Government Areas grouped into three geo-political zones – Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe.

This study employed a survey research design in the selection of respondents for the study. Randomly, one hundred and fifty respondents were targeted (50 for each of three communities selected from the three geo-political zones in Imo State) for the survey opinion. The three communities are Oboama, Awarra and Okohia in Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe zones respectively. The respondents used for the study were selected by purposive sampling (a non-probability sampling technique) and data collected through the use of a structured interview and questionnaire method. The study involved men and women between the ages 15 and 60 years plus.

Out of one hundred and fifty questionnaire distributed only one hundred and thirty representing 86.7% were returned and analyzed. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data analysis. This involved frequency distribution and percentages.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Table 1 on the socio-economic causes of rural-urban migration lucidly shows that a preponderant 46.2% of the respondents identified low employment opportunities in the rural areas as the major cause; this is followed by 27.7% that said inadequate provision of social infrastructure (education, hospital, electricity, pipe borne water, etc) in the rural areas; 13.8% identified to escape from the unattractive/dull nature of rural areas while only 12.3% said to escape from family/community conflict. Low employment opportunities in the rural areas has the highest response rate and this result is in

tandem with the empirical finding of Todaro in [24,25] that decision to migrate from the rural to urban areas owes to rural income differential and the probability of securing urban employment. Furthermore, the inadequate provision of social infrastructure in the rural areas which has the second highest response rate clearly support previous findings from scholars like [18,19] that social amenities like education, hospital, schools, etc are grossly provided in the rural areas and thus propelling them to migrate to cities. It could be inferred that the need for better economic benefits and social infrastructures are principal causes of rural-urban migration among the sampled communities. It is instructive to note that most of the respondents agreed the unattractive attractive nature of the rural areas equally contributed to rural-urban migration.

The Table 2 shows the age at which migration to cities mostly occur. Data show that age bracket 21–26 years had the highest response rate of 30 or 23.1%. This is followed by age bracket 15–20 and 27–32 years, with 26 or 20% and 20 or 15.4% respectively. Age bracket 33-38 years and 39–44 years recorded 17 or 13.1% and 13 or 10% respectively while age bracket 45–50 years, 51–56 years and above, recorded the least with 10 or 7.7%, 9 or 6.9% and 5 or 3.8% respectively. A critical look at the above findings or results reveals that the;

- i. Youths usually between the age brackets of 15 – 38 years mostly migrate from the rural communities to the urban centers. From the interview conducted, the interviewees explained further that youths migrate to cities in order to continue their education (high institution) and also seek for better economic opportunities (better job, learn skills such as tailoring, mechanic, computer, etc). Others interviewed maintained that the youths migrate to cities simply because of the boring and unattractive nature of rural life.
- ii. Elderly mostly between the ages 51 and above have lower migration rate. From the interview conducted, respondents adduced that it quite unnecessary for the elderly to abandon the rural areas since they are the custodian of culture. Equally the interviewees maintained that rural to urban migration of the elderly is low because of the superficial and impersonal social relationship that exists in the cities.

The Table 3 shows the respondents' response on the sex mostly involved in out-migration to cities. Data revealed that males had the highest response rate of 90 or 69.2% while female had 40 or 30.8%. Out of the 90 respondents that agreed that male is the sex mostly involved in out-migration to cities, Oboama with 32 or 66.7% had the highest; followed by Okohia with 30 or 71.4% while Awarra scored least with 28 or 70%. For 40 or 30.8% that the female is the sex mostly involved in out-migration, Oboama recorded the highest with 16 or 33.3%; followed by Awarra 12 or 30% while Okohia had the least with 12 or 28.6%.

The high response rate of male as the sex that is mostly involved in out-migration could be attributed to the societal pressure on men to succeed early in life. Furthermore, those interviewed maintained that societal demands like marriage and taking care of family members left behind are the major reasons why male tend to migrate to cities than females. Females are usually seen as care givers and as such required to stay at home.

The Table 4 tested the respondents' responses on the consequences of out-migration on the underdevelopment of rural communities. A preponderant 40 or 30.8% of the respondents agreed it led to loss of local man-power; this is followed by fall in agricultural productivity with 35 or 26.9%; degeneration of indigenous skills scored 25 or 19.2%; 20 or 15.4% said it is responsible for dull village life while only 10 or 7.7% said loss of culture.

It could be deduced from these findings that loss of local man-power is a major consequence of rural-urban migration. This finding is in congruence with that done by [10] that mass migration has led to brain drain that produces labour shortage in the rural areas. Agriculture being the main occupation of rural people has been seriously affected by the migration of able bodied people to cities. From the interview conducted, a respondent remarked, "since two of my sons left for Lagos, my farm has been left unattended . . . I am too frail to work".

Table 1. Distribution of respondents on the socio-economic causes of rural-urban migration

S/N	Socio-economic causes	Frequency	Percentages
1	Inadequate provision of social infrastructure (education, hospital, electricity, pipe borne water, etc) in the rural areas.	36	27.7
2	Low employment opportunity in the rural areas.	60	46.2
3	To escape the unattractive/dull nature of rural areas.	28	21.5
4	To escape from family/community conflict.	6	4.6
Total		130	100

Table 2. Distribution of respondents on the age bracket mostly migrated to cities

S/N	Age bracket mostly migrated to cities	Oboama N = 48	Awarra N = 40	Okohia N = 42	Total N = 130
1	15 – 20	8 (16.7%)	10 (25%)	8 (19%)	26 (20%)
2	21 – 26	11 (22.9%)	6 (15%)	13 (30.9%)	30 (23.1%)
3	27 – 32	7 (14.6%)	6 (15%)	7 (16.7%)	20 (15.4%)
4	33 – 38	6 (12.5%)	5 (12.5%)	6 (14.3%)	17 (13.1%)
5	39 – 44	5 (10.4%)	4 (10%)	4 (9.5%)	13 (10%)
6	45 – 50	4 (8.3%)	4 (10%)	2 (4.8%)	10 (7.7%)
7	51 – 56	4 (8.3%)	3 (7.5%)	2 (4.8%)	9 (6.9%)
8	57 – Above	3 (6.3%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	5 (3.8%)
Total		48 (100%)	40 (100%)	42 (100%)	130 (100%)

Table 3. Distribution of respondents on the sex mostly involved in out-migration

S/N	Sex mostly involved in out-migration	Oboama N = 48	Awarra N = 40	Okohia N = 42	Total N = 130
1	Male	32 (66.7%)	28 (70%)	30 (71.4%)	90 (69.2%)
2	Female	16 (33.3%)	12 (30%)	12 (28.6%)	40 (30.8%)
Total		48 (100%)	40 (100%)	42 (100%)	130 (100%)

Table 4. Distribution of respondents on the consequences of out-migration on underdevelopment

S/N	Consequences	Frequency	Percentage
1	Loss of local man-power.	40	30.8
2	Fall in agricultural productivity.	35	26.9
3	Degeneration of indigenous skills.	25	19.2
4	Responsible for dull village life	20	15.4
5	Loss of culture.	10	7.7
Total		130	100

Result from the finding also showed that the rural-urban migration has led to degeneration of indigenous skills such as mat making, pot making, bone setting, trado-medicine among others. These skills as noted by the interviewees could act as local industries and development options if properly harnessed. Unfortunately, the allure of urban life has pushed those with these skills to the cities. In most cases, such skills are abandoned to other blue-collar jobs.

Revelation from the finding also showed that out-migration result to dull village life. This single point has the back wash effect of making the available youths even more agitated to leave. It is individuals that champion development and without the necessary human capital, development is a far-cry. Culturally, rural-urban migration is closely related to the viatiation of cultural heritage of the rural people. This owes to the fact the elderly and children left in the villages may not have the zest and enthusiasm that keeps their cultural activities vibrant and thick.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study investigated and analyzed rural-urban migration and the underdevelopment of selected rural communities in the three geo-political zones of Imo State, Nigeria. This study emphasized that rural-urban migration are caused by push factors like unemployment, inadequate provision of social infrastructure among others in the rural communities. It was also concluded that younger people desire to migrate than the older people with the majority of this figures being male migrants. Overall, it was concluded that rural-urban migration has accounted for the underdevelopment of rural areas vis-à-vis: loss of local man-power; fall in agricultural productivity; degeneration of indigenous skills; loss of culture and accounting for dull village life.

Against the backdrop of these negative consequences of rural-urban migration to the underdevelopment of rural areas, the following recommendations were made to curb its prevalence and ensure the development of the Nigerian rural areas:

- i. The rural people should diversify their means of livelihood by seeking for self-reliant and sustaining ventures in both farming and non farming economic activities (petty trading, snail production, hair salon, transportation (keke), mobile food vendors, artisanship, tailoring etc.
- ii. Well meaning indigenes and corporate organizations operating in such environments should help provide social infrastructure that will keep the able-bodied men and women in the rural areas.
- iii. Community-based development NGOs should help provide the rural people with educational opportunities regarding how best to harness their indigenous skills.
- iv. The government should decentralize its development projects and programs by concentrating more in the rural areas. Small scale industries, ministries and parastatals should be established in the rural areas to check rural-urban migration.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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