

**POVERTY ALLEVIATION BASELINE IN THE RURAL AREAS OF  
NIGERIA: A RECONSIDERATION OF TRADITIONAL ACTIVITY  
ON LIVESTOCK RENTING CONCEPT “ILIWE AKU”**

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**Abstract**

*Curtailling rural poverty remains a major challenge in a developing country such as Nigeria. Rural poverty can be reduced when there is favourable cash flow of income per capital in the rural societies. Interestingly, this rural poverty could be minimized when the income opportunities are improved. Laudable development programme would be necessary and important but in most content is not enough to lift all poor rural populaces out of poverty in the country. Non-farming opportunities can bridge this gap in finding better ways for rural improvement and development. Iliwe Aku (livestock renting) is a traditional concept in Igboland that has been utilized by our great fathers in reducing rural poverty but has been abandoned for decades by the present generation. This research study has in mind to reinvigorate “Iliwe Aku (livestock renting) concept” to enhance rural economy and development therefore reducing rural poverty to an extent. The research study will examine the factors relating to Iliwe Aku (Livestock renting) concept in Igboland and its reforms. Importantly, this research study will bring to limelight and showcase traditional institution of Iliwe Aku (livestock renting) concept to the poor rural populace for renaissance. Also, the concept will significantly help in poverty alleviation when implemented on the proposed families and communities.*

**Keyword:** "Iliwe Aku (livestock renting), Rural Development, Poverty Alleviation, Caste System in Igboland

## **Introduction**

The poverty rate in Nigeria is at an alarming increase since the oil boom declined. Currently, the livelihood of the poor rural people depends on the subsistence agriculture. Assuming we understand the economies of subsistence agriculture we would know much about the poverty that has rampage people in Nigeria. Since the last five decades, subsistence agriculture has remained most consistent value standards to measure the economics of most Nigerians. The sharp contrasts into monolithic oil economy only redirect the economies of Nigeria to rentierism which in no doubt brought forward fragility and failed economy. Irrespective of oil explorations, most people in Nigeria represent significant proportion of the majority living on subsistence agriculture for their daily survival and these people are much poorer than corporate jobbers (Gustavo & Fastos, 2007).

To eradicate this vicious circle of poverty in rural areas of Nigeria, there should be ways to improve the living standard, increase income generation and social security on the poor masses. The demerit among poor people has raised some formidable questions that include: - Does rural policy demand and assess impact of policies geared towards improving agricultural productivity in Nigeria? Has government interest focused on how to improve development co-operation, trade, and agricultural policy? Has government given access to output and input market accommodation and good transportation? Is there adequate market and processing infrastructure to localize processing agricultural produce, non-discrimination of tax tariff and trade policies? What has government done in the enhancement of livestock production in the rural areas? Is there ownership right that would encourage job creation, enhance initiative and promote young rural farmers?

The objective of research study is to review the concise way of indigenous conceptual practice that has been long absent in the present generation. This indigenous conceptual practice via agricultural activities has remained a missing gap in the rural development and poverty eradication in our rural communities. Laying emphasis and re-institutionalize the traditional conceptual practice that

would play a tremendous role on poverty reduction of agricultural development in the rural areas. This indigenous concept will also enhance rural economic growth in different rural areas in Nigeria if worked upon and implemented. This study is structured to define the relationship between rural poverty and rural development, the link between poverty and reality of "*Iliwe Aku (livestock renting) concept*" in Igboland (South-eastern Nigeria), and discuss context in which spatial constraint make "*Iliwe Aku*" ancestry point necessary.

### **Rural Development**

Rural development is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. Rural development has been linked with agriculture and rural development policies in Nigeria. It has been subsumed under agricultural policy package, unfortunately, how agriculture is a driven force of rural growth has received scant attention (World Bank, 1997). Rural development is a process of improvement through which citizens' participation should play significant role in benefiting rural populations. Hence, citizen participation is relevant in improving planning process to actualize rural development (Kolade & Coblenz, 1981). The participation process not only reflects the philosophy and methodology of overall society guidance but will also improve attempt and methods of problem solving and ensure sustainable improvement of the populations' standard of living and welfare. It has been documented that about 1.5 billion populaces are extremely poor in the world and about 75 percent of this population live in the rural areas (Gustavo & Fastos, 2007). And these people in the rural areas depend on subsistence agriculture, forestry, fishery, craft and related pastoral activities for survival. The promotion of various agricultural activities like "*Iliwe Aku (livestock renting) concept*" has ways of improving rural development, rural economy and through this process would generate potential capability of increasing employment opportunities, reducing local disparities and improve standard livelihood of poor rural people. It will also weaken the pool facto mechanism that will stem pre-mature rural-urban migration and consistently reduce poverty rate in the rural areas (Gustavo & Fastos, 2007).

Interestingly, rural development is essentially a part of structural transformation characterized by diversification of the economy away from agriculture. This process is facilitated by rapid agricultural growth, at least initially but leads ultimately to a significant decline in the share of agriculture to total employment, output and in the proportion of rural population to total production (Johnston,

1970). In the recent time, the focus and definition of rural development has turned to the provision of social services and amenities to the rural poor (Ruttan, 1984). This shift posits that the availability of social amenities could enhance a rapid growth of income. Lucraix (1985) also stressed that rural development and rural agriculture produces physical capital and it is a means for economic growth which lay emphasis on capital development and human capital development.

This idea posited by Lucraix (1985) posed a sharp shift in Nigeria rural development. It has also exposed why there is the missing gap in the last three decades of a steep decline in the availability of resources, machines and loan for agriculture for rural development. It is because since the local institutional technics that had improved rural agriculture and rural sectorial economy are no longer in the use. Consequently, rural poor has fallen victim to these cross-sectorial policies that were neither localized nor incorporated into the indigenous rural practices. To buttress this, from the international scenes between 1983 – 1987 and 1998 – 2000, the annual average allocation of Official Development Assistance for Agriculture in the less developed and other low-income countries fell by 57 percent from USD 5.14 billion prices to USD 2.22 billion in 2002 (Lopez & Galinto, 2007). The information financed institution followed the same lending pattern meanwhile domestic politics spending has remained stagnant which the occurring decline impoverishes rural economy and reduction in incentives for rural investment.

An empirical study carried out in Nigeria basically support traditional approach to rural development through a localized form of practice. For instance, Ekong (1981) suggested a theory of intrinsic dualism which states that rural areas in developing countries like Nigeria are inhabited largely by illiterate and poor peasant farmers and urban areas by literate non-farm workers with different aspirations. In his claim he said this study sustain a need for separate development strategies. Respondents were drawn from Lagos and Ibadan as large urban centers and from four farmers' communities in South-west, Nigeria. The results revealed that there were marked of five groups and they were not very different in their general aspirations, exceptions and perceptions.

Another study conducted in the South-East Nigeria by Hursh *et al.*, 1993 surveyed 71 villages to determine the success or failure in the spread of agricultural modern innovation. Hursh and his co-researchers identified the factors which have contributed to success of agricultural modern innovation as age, education, and attitude towards change. The innovations failed in some villages due to ignorance caused by inadequate exposure to the benefits of innovation. And this failure should be substitute with the localized form of agricultural practices which the

rural people are used to or with generation of economic opportunity in the non-farm sector. This agricultural fundamental role will motivate in stimulating and sustaining economic transition as poor rural livelihoods shift away from being primarily subsistence agriculture to manufacturing and production services (DFID, 2004).

On the contrary, Sadoulet (2008) findings are consistent with the claims that agricultural sector growth is substantially more important than non-agricultural sector growth for the poor households in the lower expenditure distribution. For instance, these poorer segments of the population are mostly inhabited in the rural areas of Nigeria. It is indisputable that good agricultural performance operates to reduce rural poverty through both the income opportunities and food production for poor masses. This is because a high share of the poor people depends on agriculture. A generation of non-farm sector depend crop and livestock production for their foods and income. It is basic to think that an increase in non-farm income would reduce poverty.

Unfortunately, public policies in Nigeria at the national level and resource mobilization of both State and Federal have not always recognized multiplicity of profiles in livestock improvement to the rural economy. In the recent time, public policies and investments in Nigeria have favored laudable cosmetic industries and urban sector services at the expense of agricultural and rural development. Hence, rural institutional practice such as *Iliwe Aku (livestock renting) concept* has fallen victim to the lack of a cross-sectorial institutional framework.

### **Iliwe Aku (Livestock Renting) Concept In Igboland**

*Iliwe Aku (livestock renting) concept* is a poverty alleviation activity and peace building institutional programme practiced in the last 3-5 decades in Igboland to help the poor masses. In every society across Nigeria there are cultural and traditional practices that bring people, families and communities together for peaceful co-existence and mutual relationship from time immemorial. Livestock renting concept is that cultural practice in Igboland that had helped foster peace, progress and co-operation among people. For better understanding, there is the need to define the "*Iliwe Aku (livestock renting) concept*". According to Wikipedia, livestock are domesticated or semi domesticated animals raised in an agricultural setting to produce commodities such as food (meat, milk, eggs), fibre, labour, and asset. Livestock are farm animals, like cattle, sheep, goats, poultry (chickens). Livestock renting is a process of leasing out or giving out livestock

(farm animal) to people to keep in which after reproduction, it is shared between the parties that are involved is the arrangement. Livestock renting is associated with numerical benefits which includes economic benefit as a means of livelihood, hybridization of livestock for animal multiplication, promotion of peace and good relationship as social values. "*Iliwe Aku*" in Igbo customology is extended also to crop renting like yam and cocoyam renting during farming season. For instance, seed yams and cocoyams are rented to farmers who have more lands and are ready to farm in large quantities in that farming season. After that farming season, the farmers return the rented crops with addition crops to the owner in the next farming season. Certain values are attached to this culture (1) the recipient must have shown cases of hard work and respect to the elderly ones; (2) At times, the recipients are godsons to the elderly benefactor; and (3) Young children sometimes get livestock animals from the elderly ones after continuous help in doing house chores for them one like fetching water from stream, fetching goat food (palm fronts) and fetching firewood from the forest for the elderly ones. Thereafter, the livestock are giving to those responsible children as livestock leasing for him to take care for production and reproduction, after which the profits are shared equally among the parties. Livestock renting in the rural communities bridges the income barrier between the rural poor and rural rich. Livestock renting may have some shortcomings which include caste system constraint and nuclear family structure in the modern day practice with more benefits.

**Economic Benefit:** One of the benefits of livestock is basically for food, prestige, wealth, labor and the variety of food realized is rich in protein, fat and oil. Livestock generate animal protein like eggs, milk, and meat and cash which can be shared among both parties from time to time throughout the cause of the animal life span to help alleviate poverty in the local communities. During breeding period, livestock produce manure which is useful for farmers to apply as inorganic fertilizer on their crops that increase soil fertility for crop growth. In rural communities, livestock renting has proven to be a major source of income revenue, prestige and wealth for most women. It provides additional economic values for rural families during scarcity and economic crisis. On the other hand, it serves as income diversification to reduce over dependence on one income sources to some families thereby cushioning their expenditure. Livestock renting continues to promote the survival of rare breeds of livestock. In the olden days, people do bring their livestock to cross breed different species of animals in order to get a hybrid animal and products. During cross breeding, improved breeds are derived along

indigenous traits preserved. In recent years, it was believed that co-existence and sustenance of farming ties were benefit in livestock renting in communities. Both families share some farming look, affection and good relationship. Families never harbor evil thought against one another. Through livestock renting, there were increased cohabitation of people, mutual understanding and interaction between people, families and communities on this synergetic practice.

**Social Values:** People maintain traditional values, prestige and connection to families of their ancestral families and maintenance of cultural heritage. The importance of enhancing family ties, culture and way of life cannot be over-looked because it's a major motivator for continuing practice of livestock renting in many rural Igbo communities today. Other social values include atoning deities' wrath because it is believed that deities kill livestock in exchange of death occurrence to the owners. Who had offended deities?

### **The Caste System In Igboland And Its Implication On Iliwe Aku (Livestock Renting) Concept**

Osu caste system which is a practice in Igbo religion and traditional values is a social hierarchy that determines social position at birth based on hereditary and membership. Osu caste system prevents movement from one category to another. The major Osu caste system classification in Igboland include Diala, Ohu, Osu, and Ume. Diala are indigenous sons of the land (true blood) or son of the soil. They have priestly role and are considered pure in land. The Ohu are slaves who served their masters either in farm work or house chores. In some cases, Ohu are contracted where family lack offsprings in years. Ohu are needed to make up the population of few members of the family. There are so many reasons that can influence contracting Ohu in Igboland like insecurity of lives and properties, fear of invasion into the land or their farmlands, tribe wars or fights. The Osu are the outcasts. They are gotten for atonement of sin to deities either for killing a person or fear to be killed by the victim that was killed. Osu could emerge through use for appeasing of deities, having committed sin that assumed could wipe the entire family that committed such offences. Traditionally, the individual caste classification defines the role of each category thereby determine what an individual can and cannot do. The most implication duplications of this system are the division of labor based on caste classification, which provides a socially acceptable basis for discriminating treatment.

Among several discriminatory practices, the practices of untouchability have severe implications in Igbo land both in livestock renting practice and other social and traditional rites and function inclusive of marriage institution, chieftaincy and burial/funeral rites. For instance, Osu is prevented from participation in livestock renting, religious functions, entering the shops or houses of individual from other caste such as Diala, marriage institution and even attending the same church is almost attach with dismay. This practice has contributed to social ostracision for Osu caste. This caste hierarchy and division of labor is a long - standing phenomena's in Igbo land. Although caste discrimination has been prolonged for centuries, it was first abrogated in 1946 ordinance. In reality the laws and existing beueratic structures facilitated the continuance of caste system in Igbo land in the name of maintaining tradition. There is no doubt that there are several legal and political changes being implemented, in an effort to end Osu caste discrimination, the overall social transformation necessary to bring these efforts into full effect will take a long time. Caste discrimination against Osu creates various implication relating to livestock renting and access to ownership of livestock. Traditionally the Osu do not lease livestock with Diala because it is assumed it will kill livestock belonging to Diala. It also affects Market participation and level of human capital in Igbo land.

### **“Iliwe Aku” And Rural Development**

There are basic questions that would explain the effect of *Iliwe Aku* on rural development. These questions include:

- To what extent do rural development and livestock renting coincide? Is livestock sector rural growth indispensable? On answering these questions we need to have an idea of the importance of “*Iliwe Aku*” within the rural areas in Igboland. There is no direct measurement to uncover the importance of livestock renting within the rural economy.
- Livestock renting is important in most rural economics in Igboland. Any successful rural economic development strategy will contain a livestock development component. While farm produce aimed at improving the welfare of rural population through substandard improvements in the productivity of agricultural firm sector. More so, livestock development aimed at improving the welfare of rural population through the standard growth of the rural economy.



- Therefore, if we want development in rural areas, we should look at the livestock within a rural area, we should also look at the GDP or output figures from that state and measure the same of livestock output within the total value added of the state.
- We have shown from our illustration above that the importance of livestock, within the national economy declines with development, but this does not mean that the relative importance of livestock in the rural economy also falls with development given the fact that rurality also falls with development.
- Poorer rural economies with lower per capita income, and with higher incidence of poverty, not only a more rural, but in their economics livestock has a higher relative weight (Gustavo & Kostas, 2007). Thus, the poorer the economy, the more important livestock renting is for its rural and over all development. Another way to measure the value of livestock in the rural areas is to examine the share of income from livestock production renting to total rural income. This can be done through the below household projection to measure income and wages accrued from the sale of livestock renting in the next 5 – 10 years, the impact on rural development and poverty reduction on the poor masses.

### **Study Area and Data Generation**

Generated data for this study was estimated and is presented in Table 1 The estimated data are used for ten families in ten autonomous communities from two local governments of Imo State and Abia State (Ezinihitte, Ahiazu Mbaise, Umuahia North and Umuahia South) respectively. The table presents the major households and autonomous communities in the two local government areas of Imo and Abia State. The difference between Chicken, goat and sheep are significant in terms of reproduction and productivity. There is a significant difference between farm sector and non- farm sector such as livestock renting which would possibly generate more income and cash flow in the rural economy. In the data analysis, about 200 goats, 200 sheep and 200 chickens of both males and females will be distributed to ten families in ten autonomous communities from two local governments of Imo and Abia State. Annually, 800 goats, 800 sheep and 6,800 chickens are assumed to be produced within ten families of the ten autonomous communities of Umuahia South, Umuahia North, Ezinihitte and Ahiazu Mbaise LGA. About 4, 000 goats, 4, 000 sheep and 34,000 chickens are estimated to be produced within five years' period of livestock renting in the

selected study area while 8,000 goats, 8,000 sheep and 68,000 chickens are estimated to be produced within ten years' period of livestock renting of the policy projections.

## **Result and Discussion**

The table represents results of the Iliwe Aku model (livestock renting). The table clarifies the first objective that some indigenous concept that were macerate has remained a missing gap in rural development. The findings of the result claimed that livestock renting with better access are more likely to enhance rural economy. It is also a source of empowerment in rural development and enrichment bring back traditional concept of poor alleviation of some families. To test this objectively and empirically hypotheses, our results showed that livestock renting can enhance rural economy through improve and increase produce of meats, milk, and eggs. This indicates a complementary relationship between livestock input in non-farm sector and rural economic household. We also observed that caste system practice affects the increase in livestock because high caste household are restricted in the "*Iliwe Aku*" livestock renting activities in the South East, Nigeria. We also observed that there is no significant relationship between credit constrained households aid higher likelihood of renting as is resource input capital is trough renting any shared proceeds. Extraneous variables that can impede these projections include epidemic outbreak and sudden death of livestock although these variables were not indicated in projected estimate because of their occurrence.

## **Conclusion**

The need for re-institutionalized of "*Iliwe Aku*" livestock renting in the Igbo land is indicative of the complementarities within the factors of production in agriculture. Therefore, policies targeted to enhance rural agricultural productivity should also include the "*Iliwe Aku*" livestock renting and management. As most families that indulge in the livestock renting practice enhance rural economy, reduce transaction cost of livestock's, the result from the projected analysis have several important policy implications. Firstly, livestock renting can grow in a credit constrained rural economy. It has shown that low- caste households in Igbo land have high livestock productivity which therefore help them to overcome their financial problems. From this income result, it is obvious that those renting constructs enhance efficiency. Livestock Renting also promote local institutional

peace building it promote relative associations among members of a rural community. Livestock renting provide credit to land poor household for purchase of land, payment of school fees, and enhancement in family upkeep. Livestock renting could be used for networking and stock and other credit programmes in the rural areas of Nigeria.

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**PROJECTION, ESTIMATING INCOME GENERATED FROM ILIWE AKU PRACTICE ON THE RURAL POOR AREAS IN NIGERIA**

Target population				Number of animals for livestock renting			Gestation period cycle			Annual production			5 years production			10
State	LGA	Autonomous Community	Family	Goat	Sheep	Chicken	Goat (145 days)	Sheep (145 days)	Chicken (21 days)	Goat	Sheep	Chicken	Goat	Sheep	Chicken	Goat
Abia	Umuhia North	10	10	200	200	200	2	2	2	800	800	68,000	4,000	4,000	34,000	8,000
Abia	Umuhia South	10	10	200	200	200	2	2	2	800	800	68,000	4,000	4,000	34,000	8,000
Imo	Ezinihitte Mbaise	10	10	200	200	200	2	2	2	800	800	68,000	4,000	4,000	34,000	8,000
Imo	Ahiazu Mbaise	10	10	200	200	200	2	2	2	800	800	68,000	4,000	4,000	34,000	8,000

3,200,000	3,200,000	3,200,000	3,200,000	4000	Goat	Net Income
3,200,000	3,200,000	3,200,000	3,200,000	4,000	Sheep	
6,800,000	6,800,000	6,800,000	6,800,000	1000	Chicken	
16,000,000	16,000,000	16,000,000	16,000,000	4000	Goat	5 years policy programme
16,000,000	16,000,000	16,000,000	16,000,000	4,000	Sheep	
34,000,000	34,000,000	34,000,000	34,000,000	1000	Chicken	
3,200,000	3,200,000	3,200,000	3,200,000	4000	Goat	10 years policy programme
3,200,000	3,200,000	3,200,000	3,200,000	4,000	Sheep	
68,000,000	68,000,000	68,000,000	68,000,000	1000	Chicken	

*Source: Sunny Nwachukwu 2016*