

Sound and Cohesively Implemented Rural Development Strategies: A Missing Link in Africa's Fight Against Poverty?

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Abstract

Success in fighting poverty in Africa will largely depend on the extent to which rural poverty is reduced as it is largely a rural phenomenon. By examining the rural development strategies of the East African Community, Economic Community of West African States and the Association of South East Asian Nations, the purpose of this study was to determine their relationship to rural poverty reduction. The Policy Implementation Effectiveness Model and Rural Web Model tools were used to examine the soundness and cohesiveness of implementation, respectively. The results showed that rural poverty declined where a rural development strategy had both been sound and cohesively implemented. We concluded that a positive correlation exists between a sound and cohesively implemented rural development strategy and rural poverty reduction. We deduced from this that the former is a missing link in Africa's fight against rural poverty.

Key words: Rural development strategy; rural poverty; strategy soundness and cohesiveness; strategy implementation.

1. Introduction

The proportion of poor people in Africa declined from 54 percent in 1990 to 41 percent in 2015 (World Bank 2019). However, the number of poor people, as measured by the international poverty line of US\$1.90 per person per day, increased from 278 million to 413 million during the same period (World Bank 2019). The number of poor people has further increased to 433 million between 2015 and 2018 mainly due to rapid population growth (World Bank 2020). The World Bank (2019) further noted that poverty in Africa is predominantly rural, with 82 percent of the poor living in rural areas and dependent on farming for their livelihoods. More recent data showed that the proportion of poor people living in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa was 89 percent (World Bank 2020). The above figures suggest that poverty in Africa is largely a rural phenomenon. Focusing on pro-poor growth, which concerns agricultural and rural development, offers opportunities to effectively deal with rural poverty (Baah-Dwomoh, 2016; World Bank 2019). This calls for the implementation of appropriate rural development strategies.

In the rural development strategies of the 1970s, significant investment was made in different types of agricultural projects. The most significant were the public sector-managed agricultural and integrated rural development (IRD) projects (Cleaver 1997). This approach emerged after realising that the green revolution and agricultural growth-oriented programmes of the 1960s did little to improve the welfare of the poor and that dealing with rural poverty required implementing several development programmes in an integrated manner (Machethe 1995).

While some successes were recorded, overall, these IRD projects were fatally flawed in design and execution, including little or no community or beneficiary participation in decision making (Machethe 1995; Cleaver 1997; Baah-Dwomoh 2016). This was particularly the case in Africa as Baah-Dwomoh (2016) notes that Africa had the largest proportion of unsuccessful IRD projects.

A change in approach in the 1980s and 1990s saw the introduction of structural adjustment programmes, with more focus on the private sector and farmer support, particularly through agricultural extension projects. However, weaknesses in the structural adjustment approach became increasingly apparent, resulting in another shift in strategies dealing with rural poverty. Since the late 1990s, African governments have been encouraged to develop comprehensive agricultural and rural development strategies that can be supported by government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations, donors, and farming and agricultural communities (Cleaver 1997).

It is evident that various rural development strategies have been implemented over the last five decades in Africa. Despite this, poverty, and particularly rural poverty, remains a scourge. Could, as suggested by Cleaver (1997), the quality of the strategies, where they exist, and their execution be major explanations for the continued rural poverty in Africa? This paper ponders whether the lack of sound rural development strategies and/or lack of cohesiveness of their implementation are a missing link in Africa's fight against poverty. This is done by examining the rural development strategies of the East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the theoretical framework for examining the soundness and cohesiveness of implementation of a rural development strategy. Section 3 presents the methods and procedures for (a) examining the soundness and cohesiveness of a strategy; (b) profiles the theoretical expected outcome of implementing such a strategy; (c) analyses the poverty status of each of the three case studies; and (d) compares the results of the poverty status for each region to its theoretical expected outcome. Section 4 presents and discusses the results of analysis. The conclusions and recommendations are presented in section 5.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Components of a strategy

According to Hambrick & Fredrickson (2001), a strategy should consist of five elements. First, it should indicate where the action will be, the arena of focus or play. In this study, the arena of focus is the rural space in Africa with a specific focus on rural poverty reduction. Second, a strategy should identify what vehicle or means will be used (to reduce rural poverty). In this study, a rural development strategy provides the means. Third, how will the goal (reduction in rural poverty) be attained. This is about the soundness of the rural development strategy. Fourth, how fast and in what sequence will the action be taken to heighten the likelihood of success. This is about the effectiveness and cohesiveness of implementation of a sound rural development strategy. Lastly, a strategy should indicate how the returns be gauged. This is about the economic, social and cultural logic impact of implementing a rural development strategy as evidenced through rural poverty reduction trends. Of these five elements, this study is about establishing the relationship between the soundness (third element) and cohesiveness of implementation (fourth element) on the one side of the equation, and the fifth element,

the economic, social and cultural logic impact (rural poverty reduction) of rural development strategies, on the other side.

Several studies including the Van Meter *et al.* (1975) Six-Variable Model to Policy Implementation, the Giacchino & Kakabadse (2003) success factors, the Fernando (2008) Integrated Rural Development model, and the Brynard (2005) '5C Protocol' model, have considered various elements of the soundness (third element) of a strategy. Similarly, the 'Rural Web' model of Van de Ploeg and Marsden (2008) has discussed cohesiveness of implementation (fourth element) of a strategy. However, none of these models discuss the relationship between the soundness and cohesiveness of implementation of a rural development strategy and rural poverty reduction. To our knowledge, there are no previous studies that discuss this relationship. The theoretical framework of this study, therefore, is a composite of various models identified through literature review.

2.2 Soundness of a Strategy

Van Meter *et al.* (1975), according to Demartini (2010), developed a six-variable model that informs explanations for programme success and failures. The six variables were grouped into two: policy factors, comprising goal and objectives, resources, and enforcement and compliance; and policy implementation factors, comprising characteristics of the implementing agency, economic, social and political conditions, and disposition of implementers (Demartini 2010). The policy factors characterise the design and structure (soundness) of a strategy (third element of the Hambrick & Fredrickson's five elements of a strategy) and the policy implementation factors characterise cohesiveness of implementation (fourth element).

The determination of soundness of a strategy in this study was guided by six principles identified from the literature reviewed on the concept of rural development. First, a sound rural development strategy should recognise and promote the rurality or multi-functionality of territorial processes by creating a dynamic and flexible structure that integrates the internal territorial and external factors (Nemes, 2005; Vermeire *et al.*, 2008; Guinjoan *et al.*, 2016). This requires a well-researched and structured process of implementation (effective approach) characterised in this study by four indicators: clarity of vision or rationale for the strategy, clarity of goals and objectives (Giacchino *et al.* 2003), clarity of key terms applied in the strategy, and clarity of policy targeted group.

Second, it should promote efficiency through joint processing, distribution and retailing of production to ensure that value-added remains in the territory (Nemes, 2005). This requires effective resourcing characterised in this study by three indicators: adequate provision of financial resources, motivated skilled human resources in quantities sufficient to provide a critical mass, and the presence of political support that holds political ownership of the strategy and has the ability to command authority over the deployment of resources (Giacchino *et al.*, 2003).

Third, it should promote synergies which are best attained where information, innovation and business transactions flow most freely (Nemes, 2005; Vermeire *et al.*, 2008; Guinjoan *et al.*, 2016). Political and administrative parties to the strategy must exhibit willingness and ability (disposition) to share and come together to effectively implement the strategy (Brynard 2005). To this effect, parties must be willing to abide by compliance and enforcement rules and regulations set to guide good business practices.

Fourth, it should promote the utilisation of competencies where, through diversity, shared competences may be discovered from other firms from the local area and beyond, through network linkages, exchange of information, development of common business strategies, and identification of best practices all which would lead to greater efficiencies (Nemes 2005). This requires progressive reforms that allow for the development of physical capital as measured by four indicators: effective land reforms as land is one of the most critical productive asset required in agriculture (Fernando, 2008; UN 1995), the promotion of a dynamic agriculture sector (UN 1995; World Bank 2007), the promotion of rural nonfarm enterprises (Anriquez *et al.*, 2007; Mahi uddin *et al.*, 2005), and the development of rural infrastructure (Fernando, 2008).

Fifth, it should encourage sustainability of use of rural resource endowments (human capital, cultural and natural resources) (Fernando, 2008; Vermeire *et al.*, 2008; Kanbur & Rauniyar, 2010; Muhammad 2014; Guinjoan *et al* 2016). The key to sustainability is to ensure access to services and support characterised in this study through three indicators: progressive social safety net programmes (UN 1995; World Bank 1997; World Bank 2007); effective stakeholder participation (ECOSOC 2003); and the provision of public social infrastructure (UN 1995).

Sixth, it should promote social innovativeness, including capacity-building (skills, institutions, infrastructure), overcoming exclusion, enhancing local capacity and actors' participation to direct local and external forces to their benefit (ECOSOC, 2003; Fernando, 2008; Kanbur & Rauniyar, 2010; Guinjoan *et al.*, 2016). This calls for improved human capacity through the decentralisation of power that should be clearly visible through role delineation with clear demarcation of responsibilities. Furthermore,

this principle requires the development of collaborative competences as measured through capacity strengthening of individuals and their rural institutions.

Considering that no single model could be identified to examine the soundness of a rural development strategy, and deriving from the above, a composite theoretical framework and tool, the Rural Development Strategy Soundness Model Tool (Table 1), was developed to examine the soundness of a rural development strategy against the six guiding principles of a sound strategy.

Table 1: Rural Development Strategy Soundness Model Tool

Guiding Principles of Soundness	Policy Characteristics	Policy Modules	Desired Impact	Variables	Indicators of Measure (Poverty Related Elements)
Rurality or multi-functionality of territorial processes	Design and Structure of a Rural Development Strategy	Policy Factors	Effective Approach	Policy Goal and Objectives	Presence of clear policy background and rationale for why the policy was formulated
					Presence of explicit statutory goals and objectives aimed at the rural poor
					Presence of clear definition of key terms
Efficiency			Effective Resourcing	Policy Resources	Adequate provision of financial resources
					Adequate provision of human resources
Synergies			Enhanced Commitment	Policy Enforcement and Compliance	Presence of political support
Competencies	Socio-Economic processes and systems influencing strategy implementation	Economic Environment Factors	Improved Income related factors	Physical Capital Development	Existence of clear compliance and enforcement terms and conditions governing business practices
					Effective land reforms
					Promotion of dynamic agricultural sector
Sustainability		Social Environment Factors	Improved non-income related factors	Access to services and support	Promotion of rural nonfarm enterprises
					Existence of social safety nets including subsidies programmes
					Existence of rural infrastructure
Social Innovativeness	Political environment influencing implementing actors	Political Environment Factors	Enhanced characteristics of implementing agencies	Decentralisation of Power	Existence of social safety nets including subsidies programmes
			Enhanced disposition of implementers	Collaborative Competencies	Promotion of effective stakeholder participation (inclusiveness)
					Existence of public social infrastructure (Education, Health and Extension Services)
					Existence of clear role delineation
					Promotion of capacity strengthening of rural institutions
Source: Author (Adapted from Van Meter et al (1975) as cited by Demartini (2010); Giacchino & Kakabadse (2003); Brynard (2005); Fernando (2008); and Muhammad (2014)					

2.3 Cohesiveness of Implementation

Van de Ploeg and Marsden (2008)'s 'Rural Web' model offered a diagnostic tool to assess the development potentials of rural areas and an analytical tool for the analysis and comparison of different processes of rural development (Guinjoan *et al.*, 2016). The six dimensions of the 'Rural Web' were selected in this study as a comprehensive model to determine cohesiveness of implementation of a rural development strategy. These dimensions, endogeneity, novelty production, market governance, institutional frameworks, sustainability and social capital, define a constellation of individuals, resources, activities and processes that interrelate with and jointly shape the territory's economic, social, cultural, and environmental attractiveness (Guinjoan *et al.*, 2016).

The endogeneity dimension is the extent to which a rural development strategy recognises and makes use of the multi-functionality of the rural space by creating dynamic and flexible structures that integrate the internal and external factors to a territory (Nemes 2005; Vermeire *et al.*, 2008; Galdeano-Gómez *et al.*, 2010; Guinjoan *et al.*, 2016). Endogeneity is expressed by the strategy rationale, goals and objectives, definition of key terms and identifiable policy target groups.

The novelty production dimension is the extent to which improved processes of production, products, and patterns of cooperation are targeted for the rural space (Nemes 2005; Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2008; Guinjoan *et al.*, 2016) by promoting sound business strategies and patterns of cooperation. Novelty production is determined by the level of both human and financial resourcing as well as the presence of political support given to the strategy.

Market governance is the extent to which the implementation of a rural

development strategy promotes good business governance in the rural space (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2008) as determined through the compliance and enforcement terms and conditions that govern business practices.

Institutional frameworks are the extent to which institutional capacity development and provision of public social infrastructures for business development are targeted for the rural space (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2008) as determined through the promotion of physical capital development measured by the level of progress in land reforms, promotion of a dynamic agriculture sector, promotion of rural nonfarm enterprises and development of rural infrastructure.

Sustainability is the extent to which rural development strategies recognise and provide for knowledge, skills and capacity development in the rural space (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2008) through the promotion of knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial development (Nemes 2005; Vermeire *et al.*, 2008; Galdeano-Gómez *et al.*, 2010) as measured by the existence of social safety nets, promotion of effective stakeholder participation and provision of public social infrastructure.

Finally, social capital is understood as the ability to get things done collectively, it is about the extent to which rural development strategies promote decentralisation of power (measured through clarity of roles and responsibilities) and development of collaborative competences (measured by the level of capacity strengthening of rural institutions) that allow for achieving the desired goals (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2008; Muhammad 2014).

From the above, Table 2 was constructed as the ‘Rural Web’ theoretical framework for determining cohesiveness of implementation of a rural development strategy.

Table 2: ‘Rural Web’ Model Tool for Cohesiveness of Strategy Implementation

‘Rural Web’ Variables	Desired Impact	Indicators of Measure (Poverty Related Elements)
Endogeneity	Dynamic and flexible structures to integrate the internal and external factors promoted	Presence of clear policy background and rationale for why the policy was formulated
		Presence of explicit statutory goals and objectives aimed at the rural poor
		Presence of clear definition of key terms
		Presence of clearly identifiable policy target groups including areas of focus / cooperation
Novelty Production	Sound nature of business strategies and patterns of cooperation promoted	Adequate provision of financial resources
		Adequate provision of human resources
		Presence of political support
Market Governance	Sound nature and manner in which markets are organised promoted	Existence of clear compliance and enforcement terms and conditions governing business practices
Institutional Frameworks	Physical capital developed	Effective land reforms
		Promotion of dynamic agricultural sector
		Promotion of rural nonfarm enterprises
		Existence of rural infrastructure
Sustainability	Knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial development (social development) promoted	Existence of social safety nets including subsidies programmes
		Promotion of effective stakeholder participation (inclusiveness)
		Existence of public social infrastructure (Education, Health and Extension Services)
Social Capital	Decentralisation of power and enhanced collaborative competencies of local communities promoted	Existence of clear role delineation
		Promotion of capacity strengthening of rural institutions
Source: Author – Adapted from Van Der Ploeg & Marsden (2008) ‘Rural Web’ Model		

2.4 Profiling of Theoretical Expected Outcomes

The fifth element of Hambrick & Fredrickson (2001)’s five elements of a strategy is about gauging the outcome of implementing a strategy. Marland (1995) noted that, by studying a policy's level of conflict and ambiguity, testable predictions can be made as to how the implementation process will unfold. The Matland (1995) Ambiguity – Conflict Model allows for the profiling of theoretical expected outcomes of implementing a strategy.

On the one hand, policy ambiguity arises from ambiguity of goals in the policy and/or from ambiguity of means in its implementation, it is about the soundness of a strategy. On the other hand, policy conflict exists when more than one organisation see a policy as directly relevant to their interests, but they have incongruous views (Matland 1995). Policy conflict, which reflects the level of cohesiveness of implementation, can arise based on the goals or the means to implement the policy (Matland, 1995). Together, as outlined in Table 3, policy ambiguity and conflict can be used to profile the expected outcomes of implementing a strategy.

Table 3: The Matland (1995) Ambiguity - Conflict Matrix: Policy Implementation Processes Model

		POLICY CONFLICT	
		Low	High
POLICY AMBIGUITY	Low	(Quadrant 1): Administrative Implementation (Desired outcomes are determined by resources) 1. Goals are clear. 2. Means of implementation are known and clearly articulated. 3. Sufficient resources are allocated.	(Quadrant 2): Political Implementation (Desired outcomes are determined by power) 1. Goals are clear but there is dissension among actors. 2. Means of implementation are known and clearly articulated but there are conflict battles among actors. 3. Essential resources are controlled by sceptical actors outside implementing organisations. 4. Coalition strength at the macro level determines the implementation outcome
	High	(Quadrant 3): Experimental Implementation (Desired outcomes are determined by contextual conditions) 1. Goals are ambiguous. 2. Means of implementation are unclear. 3. Implementation processes are dominated by contextual conditions. 4. Fluid participation by changing actors. 5. Outcomes are dependent on resources and implementing actors present.	(Quadrant 4): Symbolic Implementation (Desired outcomes are determined by local level coalition strength) 1. Goals are unclear. 2. Means of implementation are unclear. 3. Coalition strength at the micro level determines the implementation outcome
Source: Adapted from Matland (1995)			

By analysing the theoretical expected profiles of implementing a rural development strategy against the actual poverty trends in the three case studies, allowed for the determination in this study as to whether there is a relationship between a sound and cohesively implemented rural development strategy and rural poverty reduction.

3. Methods and procedures

This section discusses the tools and procedures used to analyse the soundness and cohesiveness of implementation of rural development strategies as well as the methods for profiling the theoretical expected outcome of implementing a strategy. It also discusses the sources of data used in the analysis of poverty status in each of the case studies.

3.1 Examination of rural development strategies

This study examined the rural development strategies of three regional networks, namely, the EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy of 2006 (EAC 2006a; EAC 2006b); the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy of 2005 (ECOWAS 2005); and the ASEAN Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (FAP-RDPE) of 1999 (ASEAN 1976; ASEAN 1995; ASEAN 1997); FAP-RDPE of 2004 (ASEAN 2003); FAP-RDPE of 2011 (ASEAN 2012); and FAP-RDPE of 2016 (ASEAN 2017). Illustrated in Figure 1, is a six-step process developed to examine the rural development strategies towards establishing whether there is a correlation between a sound strategy that is cohesively implemented and rural poverty reduction.

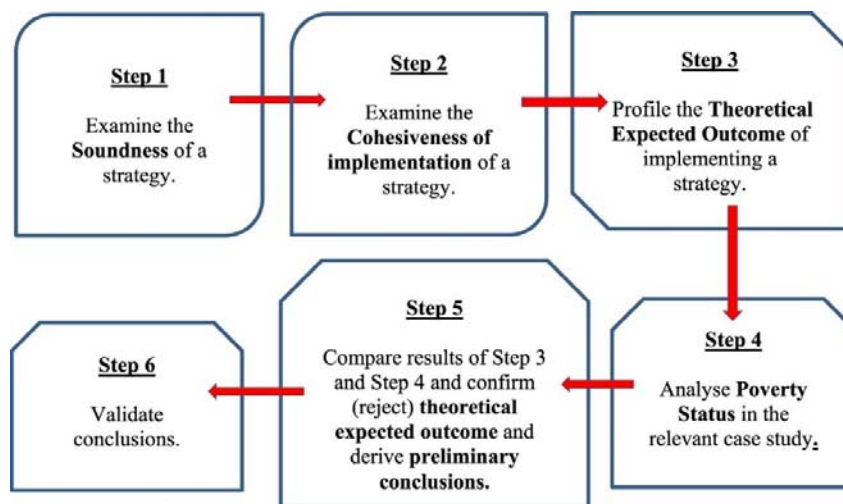


Figure 1: Process of Examination of Rural Development Strategy

Using the Rural Development Strategy Soundness Model Tool (Table 1), each indicator was examined for its level of ambiguity in the first step of the process in Figure 1. 'Low' level ambiguity implied clarity in the strategy provisions such that implementers shared the same level of understanding and commonly subscribed to the strategy objectives and means of implementation. The likelihood of reducing rural poverty through such a strategy would be high. Conversely, 'high' ambiguity meant that the objectives and means of implementation of the strategy were not commonly shared among the implementers and the likelihood of successful implementation was low. For each indicator examined, a score of 'high' or 'low' was awarded. A strategy was found to be sound if the majority of the indicators were of 'low' ambiguity, and unsound if the majority of the indicators were of 'high' ambiguity.

The second step of the process in Figure 1 examined cohesiveness of implementation of a strategy by ascertaining the level of conflict in the indicators using the Van de Ploeg and Marsden (2008) 'Rural Web' model tool (Table 2). A 'high' score was awarded if the level of conflict was considered detrimental to or not conducive for achieving rural poverty reduction and a 'low' score was awarded if the level of conflict to implementing the strategy was considered low. A strategy was considered to have been cohesively implemented if the majority of the indicators were of 'low' conflict, and vice versa.

Using the results from the first and second steps of Figure 1, ambiguity/conflict coordinates were generated for each indicator for use in the third step. Indicators were then scattered onto the Matland Ambiguity-Conflict Model Tool (Table 3) by their resultant ambiguity/conflict coordinates. The paradigm found most dominant by the majority of

indicators falling into it described more closely the theoretical expected outcome of implementing that strategy.

The fourth step in the process of Figure 1 was about deriving the poverty status in each case studied with the view to comparing this status with the theoretical expected outcome of implementing a rural development strategy as profiled in step 3. Statistical and trend analyses on poverty headcount and ratios were used as proxy for poverty status in the cases studied.

The fifth step in the process of Figure 1 correlates the theoretical expected outcome of a rural development strategy, to the poverty status of the relevant region. This comparison allows for preliminary conclusions to be drawn towards ascertaining whether or not a correlation exists between a sound strategy that is cohesively implemented and rural poverty reduction.

The sixth and last step allows for the validation of the preliminary conclusions derived in the fifth step through additional literature reviews and triangulation of information available.

3.1 Sources of data

Population data for poverty trend analyses was a major challenge for this study. Poverty data sets such as poverty headcount and associated ratios disaggregated between urban and rural population for most countries in the East African Community and the Economic Community of West African States countries were most difficult to secure. Where such data was found, particularly from the World Development Indicators by the

World Bank (2020), it was so scattered across countries and over time for meaningful trend analyses. Similarly, data for most of the countries in the ASEAN region was also scant and scattered.

The Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) (2014)¹ provided a complementary set of aggregated poverty data. This data allowed for trend analyses in poverty headcount and ratios but only at the aggregate level (total population). Another drawback on the ReSAKSS data was that the data had only been derived covering the period 1980 to 2012.

4. Results and discussions

This section presents the results of the examination of soundness and cohesiveness of implementation of rural development strategies in three case studies and profiles the theoretical expected outcomes of implementing the strategies. It then presents the results of analysis of poverty status in each case study and compares these results to the profiled theoretical expected outcome to allow for determining whether or not a correlation exists between a sound and cohesively implemented rural development strategy and rural

¹ ReSAKSS is a programme facilitated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in partnership with Africa-based Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres to develop data sets on a range of indicators including poverty for countries on the African continent. ReSAKSS obtained annual data where it did not exist by using straight line regression analysis and regression estimates on World Bank data to predict or forecast missing observations. Data sets available from the ReSAKSS source were for the period 1980 to 2012.

poverty reduction.

Table 4: Results of Analysis of Levels of Ambiguity (Soundness) of Rural Development Strategies in Three Case Studies

Indicators of Measure	Policy Ambiguity (PA) Findings – EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (2005 – 2030)	Policy Ambiguity (PA) Findings – Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) (2009)	Policy Ambiguity (PA) Findings – Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (1999-2004 to 2016-2020)
1. Policy background / rationale	Low Policy Ambiguity (LPA)	Low Policy Ambiguity (LPA)	Low Policy Ambiguity (LPA)
2. Statutory goals and objectives	LPA	LPA	LPA
3. Definition of key terms	High Policy Ambiguity (HPA)	High Policy Ambiguity (HPA)	High Policy Ambiguity (HPA)
4. Policy's target groups including areas of focus / cooperation	LPA	LPA	LPA
5. Financial resources	LPA	LPA	LPA
6. Human resources	LPA	LPA	LPA
7. Political support	LPA	LPA	LPA
8. Compliance terms and conditions (Sanctions for non-compliance)	HPA	LPA	LPA
9. Effective land reform	LPA	HPA	LPA
10. Dynamic agricultural sector	LPA	LPA	LPA
11. Rural nonfarm enterprises	LPA	LPA	LPA
12. Rural infrastructure	LPA	HPA	LPA
13. Social safety nets including subsidies	HPA	LPA	LPA
14. Inclusiveness (Effective Stakeholder Participation)	LPA	LPA	LPA
15. Public social infrastructure (Education, Health and Extension Services)	LPA	LPA	LPA
16. Role Delineation	LPA	LPA	LPA
17. Capacity Strengthening of Rural Institutions	LPA	LPA	LPA
Source: Author based on analysis of regional rural development strategies in the East African Community, Economic Community of West African States and Association of South Asian Nations.			

4.1 Soundness and cohesiveness of implementation of rural development strategies – case studies

The results of analysis of soundness (levels of ambiguity) in the cases studied are summarised in Table 4.

In the cases of the EAC and ECOWAS, the majority of the indicators, (14 out of 17 each), were of ‘low policy ambiguity’. In the case of the ASEAN, 16 out of 17 indicators were of ‘low policy ambiguity’. These results imply that in all three case studies, the strategies were sound, hence, they were likely to reduce rural poverty subject to cohesive implementation.

Table 5 summarises the results of analysis of cohesiveness of implementation (level of policy conflict) of rural development strategies in the three case studies.

In both the EAC and ECOWAS, the majority of the indicators were of ‘high policy conflict’ (16 out of 17 for the EAC and 14 out of 17 for ECOWAS) implying that the implementation of these strategies was not cohesive. In the case of the EAC, issues of insufficient resources (human and financial, systems and procedures) as well as the lack of political will to invest in the agriculture and rural sector were central to lack of cohesiveness in the implementation of the strategy (EAC 2011). Overall, while sound, this lack of cohesive implementation raised higher the probability that the EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy would not reduce rural poverty.

Table 5: Results of Analysis of Levels of Conflict (Cohesiveness of Implementation) of Rural Development Strategies in Three Case Studies

Indicators of Measure	Policy Conflict (PC) Findings – EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (2005 – 2030)	Policy Conflict (PC) Findings – Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) (2009)	Policy Conflict (PC) Findings – Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (1999-2004 to 2016-2020)
1. Policy background / rationale	Low Policy Conflict (LPC)	Low Policy Conflict (LPC)	Low Policy Conflict (LPC)
2. Statutory goals and objectives	High Policy Conflict (HPC)	High Policy Conflict (HPC)	LPC
3. Definition of key terms	HPC	HPC	High Policy Conflict (HPC)
4. Policy's target groups including areas of focus / cooperation	HPC	LPC	LPC
5. Financial resources	HPC	HPC	LPC
6. Human resources	HPC	HPC	LPC
7. Political support	HPC	HPC	LPC
8. Compliance terms and conditions (Sanctions for non-compliance)	HPC	HPC	LPC
9. Effective land reform	HPC	HPC	HPC
10. Dynamic agricultural sector	HPC	HPC	LPC
11. Rural nonfarm enterprises	HPC	LPC	LPC
12. Rural infrastructure	HPC	HPC	LPC
13. Social safety nets including subsidies	HPC	HPC	LPC
14. Inclusiveness (Effective Stakeholder Participation)	HPC	HPC	LPC
15. Public social infrastructure (Education, Health and Extension Services)	HPC	HPC	LPC
16. Role Delineation	HPC	HPC	LPC
17. Capacity Strengthening of Rural Institutions	HPC	HPC	LPC
Source: Author based on analysis of regional rural development strategies in the East African Community, Economic Community of West African States and Association of South Asian Nations.			

In the case of ECOWAS, issues of uncoordinated actions, lack of harmonised implementation of actions on the priorities of the Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), and lack of provision of sufficient means (human and financial resources and political will) were among the key challenges (ECOWAS 2010; FAO & AfDB 2015). Overall, while

sound, this lack of cohesive implementation raised higher the probability that ECOWAP would not reduce rural poverty.

In the case of the ASEAN, 15 out of 17 indicators were of ‘low policy conflict’ implying that implementation of the strategy was cohesive. Taking into account that the strategy had been determined to be sound, cohesiveness of its implementation was expected to result in reduced rural poverty in the region.

Deriving from the above results of examining for soundness (Tables 4) and for cohesiveness of implementation (Table 5), indicators for each case study were scattered by their ambiguity / conflict coordinates onto the Matland (1995) Ambiguity – Conflict Model Tool (Table 3) to profile their theoretical expected outcomes. Table 6 is the scatter of indicators for the EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy.

Table 6: Scatter of EAC Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy Indicators by their Policy Ambiguity / Policy Conflict Coordinates

		POLICY CONFLICT	
		Low	High
POLICY AMBIGUITY	Low	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy background / rationale 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statutory goals and objectives 2. Policy’s target groups including areas of focus / cooperation 3. Financial resources 4. Human resources 5. Political support 6. Effective land reform 7. Dynamic agricultural sector 8. Rural nonfarm enterprises 9. Rural infrastructure 10. Inclusiveness (Effective Stakeholder Participation) 11. Public social infrastructure (Education, Health and Extension Services) 12. Role Delineation 13. Capacity Strengthening of Rural Institutions
	High		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Definition of key terms 2. Compliance terms and conditions (Sanctions for non-compliance) 3. Social safety nets including subsidies

Source: Author - Adapted from Matland (1995)

The majority of the indicators (13 out of 17) for the EAC fell into the ‘Low Policy Ambiguity/High Policy Conflict’ quadrant. This confirmed that strategy goals were clear but the lack of willingness and power to invest in the agriculture and rural sector rendered the strategy ineffective. Reduced rural poverty was therefore not expected.

In the case of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP), Table 7 is the scatter of the indicators based on their policy ambiguity/policy conflict coordinates.

The majority of the indicators (11 out of 17) fell into the ‘Low Policy Ambiguity/High Policy Conflict’ quadrant confirming that while the strategy was sound, the region failed to garner sufficient investment, collaboration and cooperation in implementing it. Reduced rural poverty was therefore not expected.

Table 7: Scatter of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) Indicators by their Policy Ambiguity / Policy Conflict Coordinates

		POLICY CONFLICT	
		Low	High
POLICY AMBIGUITY	Low	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy Background and Rationale 2. Policy Target Groups 3. Rural Nonfarm Enterprises 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goals and Objectives 2. Financial Resources 3. Human Resources 4. Political Support 5. Compliance Terms and Conditions 6. Dynamic Agricultural Sector 7. Social safety nets including subsidies 8. Inclusiveness (Effective Stakeholder Participation) 9. Public social infrastructure (Education, Health and Extension Services) 10. Role Delineation 11. Capacity Strengthening of Rural Institutions
	High		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Definition of Key Terms 2. Effective Land Reforms 3. Rural Infrastructure

Source: Author - Adapted from Matland (1995)

In the case of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, Table 8 is the scatter of the seventeen indicators.

Table 8: Scatter of ASEAN Framework Action Plans on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication Indicators by Policy Ambiguity / Policy Conflict Coordinates

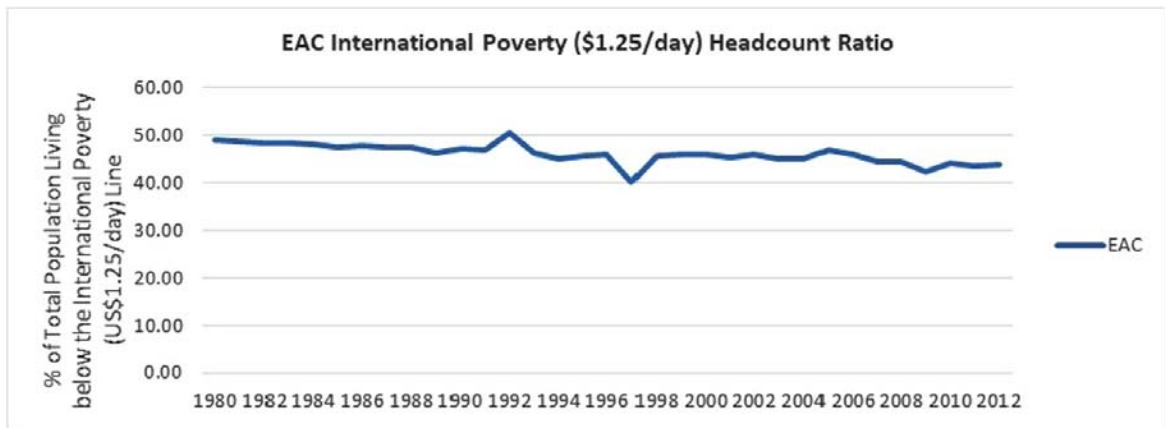
		POLICY CONFLICT	
		Low	High
POLICY AMBIGUITY	Low	1. Policy background / rationale 2. Statutory goals and objectives 3. Policy's target groups including areas of focus / cooperation 4. Financial resources 5. Human resources 6. Political support 7. Compliance terms and conditions (Sanctions for non-compliance) 8. Dynamic agricultural sector 9. Rural nonfarm enterprises 10. Rural infrastructure 11. Social safety nets including subsidies 12. Inclusiveness (Effective Stakeholder Participation) 13. Public social infrastructure (Education, Health and Extension Services) 14. Role Delineation 15. Capacity Strengthening of Rural Institutions	1. Effective land reform
	High		1. Definition of key terms

Source: Author - Adapted from Matland (1995)

The majority of the indicators, (15 out of 17), fell into the ‘Low Policy Ambiguity/Low Policy Conflict’ quadrant confirming that the strategy was sound and the means of implementing the strategy were sufficiently provided for. Reduced rural poverty was therefore expected.

4.2 Poverty status analyses results – case studies

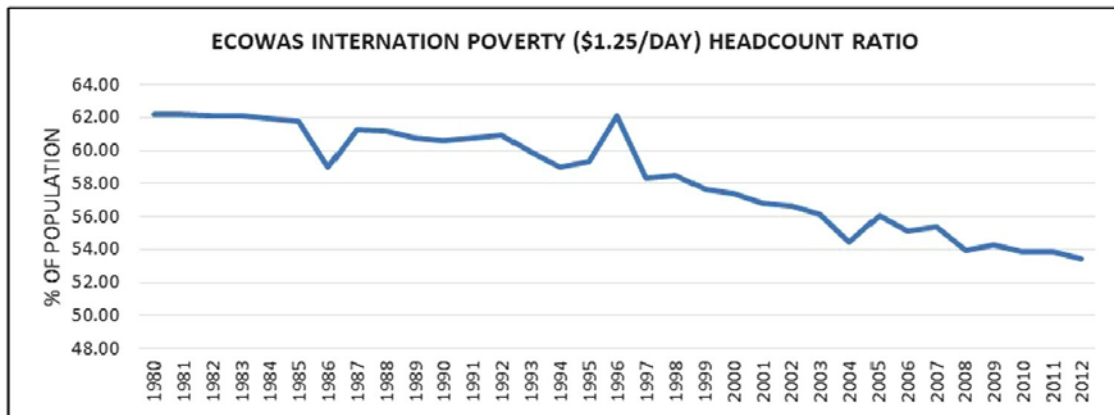
Figure 2 depicts a declining trend in poverty in the EAC as measured by the poverty index, the International Poverty (\$1.25/day) Headcount Ratio (% of total population).



Source: Author's Calculations Based on Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS 2014) data and World Bank 2014 population data

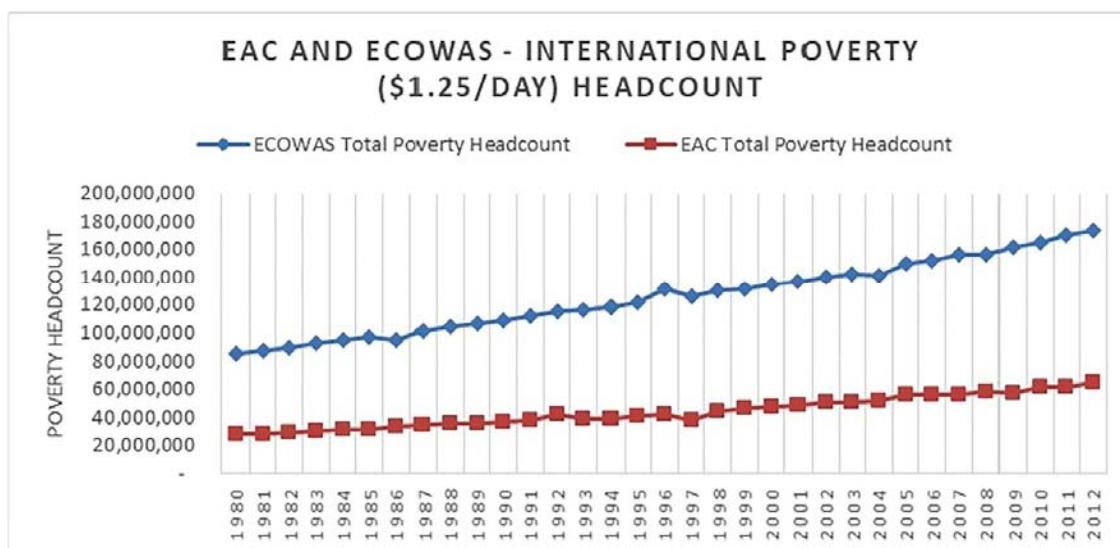
Figure 2: International Poverty (\$1.25/day) Headcount Ratio (% of Population) for EAC

A similar declining trend in the poverty headcount ratio was also observed in ECOWAS as depicted in Figure 3.



Source: Author's Calculations Based on Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS 2014) data and World Bank 2014 population data

Figure 3: International Poverty (% of Total Population) Headcount Ratio in ECOWAS



Source: Author’s Calculations Based on Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS 2014) data and World Bank 2014 population data

Figure 4: Poverty Headcount at International Poverty (US\$1.25/day) Line in the EAC and ECOWAS

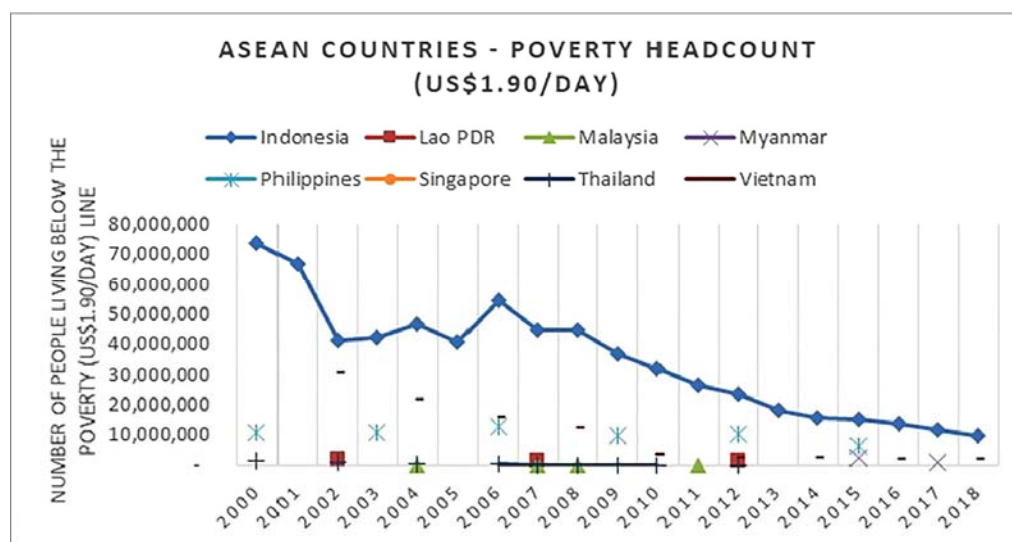
While the ratio declined from 49.03% in 1980 to 43.94% in 2012 in the EAC, the absolute number of poor people increased during the same period from 27.8 million in 1980 to 64.8 million in 2012. Similarly, while the ratio declined from 62.2% in 1980 to 53.4% in 2012 in ECOWAS, the absolute number of poor people increased from 85.2 million in 1980 to 173.5 million in 2012. Figure 4 is a graphic illustration of the poverty trends for the EAC and ECOWAS during the period 1980 to 2012.

The upward trajectory remained although there were some signs of slowing down in some of the countries based on recent but scant data to 2018 as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Poverty Headcount (US\$1.90 / day) (Millions of people)

Country Name	2000	2002	2003	2005	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
East African Community (EAC) Countries																
Burundi					6						6.9					
Kenya				16.1									17.8			
Rwanda	6.2			6.1				6.3			6.3			6.6		
Tanzania	28.9					24.5			22.7						27.0	
Uganda		16.3		15.6			14			12.3				16.5		
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Countries																
Benin			3.7					5.0					5.2			
Burkina Faso			7.3				8.4					7.7				
Cote d'Ivoire		4.2											6.9			
Gambia, The			.7					.5					.2			
Ghana				5.3						3.0				3.7		
Guinea		5.4				5.7				3.8						
Guinea-Bissau		.7						10.4								
Liberia						2.5						1.8		2.0		
Mali					6.9		7.3						.2			
Mauritania																
Niger				10.3		10.6			8.7			8.7				
Nigeria			74.3				87.0									76.6
Senegal				4.2					5.0							
Sierra Leone			3.8						3.6							3.3
Togo					3.3				3.6				3.7			
Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Countries																
Brunei Darussalam																
Cambodia																
Indonesia	73.8	41.3	42.3	40.7	54.8	44.8	37.0	32.2	26.7	23.6	18.38	15.8	15.0	13.6	11.9	9.6
Lao PDR		1.7				1.5				1.4						
Malaysia						.13			.03							
Myanmar													2.5		.75	
Philippines	10.7		10.8		12.7		9.9			10.1			6.1			
Singapore																
Thailand																
Vietnam																
Source: World Bank Population Data, 2020. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL . Accessed 12 April 2021.																

In the case of the ASEAN region, Figure 5 depicts the trends in the poverty headcounts (US\$1.90/day) (total population) between 2000 and 2018.



Source: World Bank (2020) metadata (See Table 4)

Figure 5: ASEAN Poverty Headcount (US\$1.90/day)

Clearly, the absolute number of poor people, whilst still large, had declined considerably in the ASEAN countries (Table 9). Indonesia, with the largest absolute numbers of poor people, dropped by nearly 87% from 73.8 million poor people in 2000 to 9.6 million in 2018. Similarly, the Philippines dropped from 10.7 million poor people in 2000 to 6.1 million people in 2015, a 43% decline. Vietnam was even more impressive at a drop by 94% from 30.2 million poor people in 2002 to 1.8 million in 2018. Based on these trajectories, suffice to conclude that rural poverty significantly declined in the ASEAN region where the majority of the population live in rural areas.

4.3 Comparison between theoretical expected outcomes and poverty status in case studies

The results of analysis of the soundness and cohesiveness of implementation of rural development strategies and their theoretical expected outcomes as determined in sub-section 4.1 were such that, in the case of the EAC and ECOWAS, reduced rural poverty was unlikely. In the case of the ASEAN, reduced rural poverty was highly likely. The results of poverty status analysis as discussed in sub-section 4.2 confirmed these theoretical expected outcomes in all three case studies.

This overall result is supported, in the case of the EAC, by the EAC Vision 2050 of 2016 which confirmed that the EAC-Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy (EAC-ARDS) had been poorly implemented. The vision noted in 2016 that some ten years since the signing of the EAC-ARDS in 2006, investments in the agriculture sector had remained relatively low with little effect to transform the sector (EAC 2016). Reith & Boltz (2011) had earlier also noted that while the East African Community was good in developing

sound strategies, it generally was very weak in execution and implementation of those strategies (Reith & Boltz, 2011).

Similarly, in the ECOWAS region, The FAO & AfDB (2015) reported that while the ECOWAP/CAADP plans had (a) correctly identify the key constraints to agricultural growth in the region; and (b) designed sound approaches to address these constraints, they lacked consistent implementation (FAO & AfDB 2015). The FAO & AfDB (2015) further noted that, among other issues, there was need for greater investment in the development of human resources to implement these policies and plans (FAO & AfDB 2015).

In the case of the ASEAN, while it could be argued that due to the large rural to urban migration that occurred especially in countries such as Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Malaysia and Thailand due to the economic boom, the overall poverty scenario in the rural areas during the period reviewed improved tremendously. As stated by Corner (1997), since the inception of the ASEAN (Corner 1997), reduced levels of rural poverty had been achieved. This observation was further supported by the report of the ASEAN Regional Assessment of MDG Achievement and Post-2015 Development Priorities (ASEAN 2015) which noted that the number and share of people suffering from high levels of deprivation had fallen dramatically and consistently over time. The report concluded that a region that previously struggled with pervasive levels of extreme poverty had been transformed to one with moderate poverty levels (ASEAN 2015). This observation was corroborated by Sumarto & Moselle (2015) who, in their review and analysis of mechanisms through which the ASEAN quantifies

progress vis-à-vis poverty and socio-economic development, confirmed the declining trends (Sumarto & Moselle, 2015).

5. Conclusions

The impetus for this study stemmed from the need to practically examine the relationship between a sound and cohesively implemented rural development strategy and rural poverty reduction. The results of this study showed that where a rural development strategy has been both sound and cohesively implemented as in the case of the ASEAN, rural poverty had significantly reduced. Without doubt, there are many other economic and non-economic strategies and policies that complement the rural development strategy and therefore influence the levels of rural poverty reduction. However, based on the analyses undertaken and the literature reviewed, suffice to infer that a positive correlation exists between a sound and cohesively implemented rural development strategy and rural poverty reduction. For Africa to significantly reduce rural poverty, it requires not merely the development of sound rural development strategies but cohesive implementation, making soundness and cohesiveness of implementation of rural development strategies a missing link in Africa's fight against poverty.

With respect to future research, consideration should be given to (a) developing quantitative methods to determine the soundness and cohesiveness of implementing a rural development strategy as this study relied upon qualitative and interpretive methods; (b) generating disaggregated data particularly on rural poverty indicators; and (c) undertaking more studies on the relationship between sound and cohesively implemented rural development strategies and rural poverty reduction at both the regional and country levels.

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