

EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This project work focuses on "evaluation of the impact of government poverty alleviation programme in Nigeria. In the course of this work, five research questions were stated. The findings are that NAPEP has generally impacted positively on the living standard of Nigerians, and that effective monitoring of NAPEP is a necessary condition for its success. The following recommendation are made, that the government should adopt punitive measures and show its willingness and readiness to punish those specialized in the act of sabotaging governments' efforts at addressing the problems of poverty in the country, project personnel should be well educated and equipped and that most communities do not have access to electronic and print media optimally for their benefits, because they are uneducated. Therefore, other means of communications, like enlightening them in their local languages and the use of local announcers could do some magic.

Background of the Study

The concept of poverty is a critical one in contemporary social discussions. Social sciences' literature is replete with attempt by economists and other social scientists to conceptualize the problem. Poverty has its offshoot/outgrowth on the economic, social and political lives of the people. Primarily, poverty has been interpreted in the following ways:

- (a) Lack of access to basic needs/goods
- (b) Lack of access to productive resources.

The basic needs/goods include: food, shelter, water and health care. The access to productive resources are as follows: education, working skill and tools, political and civil rights to participate in decision concerning socio-economic conditions (Ajakaiye and Adejeje 2001 in Gbosi, 2004). The poor are generally deprived materially, socially alienated and politically excommunicated. They are exposed to violence, injustice and uncertainty in the face of unexpected situations like sickness, accidents and natural disasters. 2010 Global Monitoring Report (GMR) of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) revealed that about 92% of the Nigeria's population survives on less than \$1 daily. To a country regarded as the "Giant of Africa", it is a big embarrassment. Nigeria with its enormous resources and potentials in ranking 20th among the world's poorest countries is nothing to write home about.

Of a truth, there is actually widespread poverty in the nation and the consequences of this on development is absurd. There is also this fact that the quality of life of most Nigerians has been on the downward trend. While a tremendous number of Nigerians are wallowing in abject

poverty, very few privileged live in opulence. Poverty in Nigeria is characterized by hunger, homelessness, disease, malnutrition, high child mortality rate, family disintegration, unemployment, human trafficking, child labour, kidnapping, killing, sexual assault, drug abuse, prostitution etc.

The level of poverty in Nigeria since the implementation of SAP in 1980s has tremendously increased (UNDP Nigeria, 1998; FOS, 1999 World Bank, 1999). The CBN/World Bank study on Poverty Assessment and Alleviation in Nigeria (1999) attests to the fact that living and environmental conditions of those living in the rural areas have worsened, with urban poverty gradually increasing in the country. This is as a result of under provision of facilities and amenities which are already inadequate to match the growing demand of the urban populace as well as the rural urban movement which has caused serious pressure on the existing infrastructural facilities.

Poverty has earned recognition in the extent of its ravaging society and affairs of humanity at the international, national and local levels. The need exists now for urgent action towards its eradication and control. Poverty is indeed a snare. It is dehumanizing. More strategically effort should be made to eradicate it (cited on Obadanm 1996). The government's concern over increasing poverty level in Nigeria and the need to eradicate it so as to improve the standard of living of the people led to the conceptualization and implementation of various targeted or non-targeted poverty eradication and alleviation programmes. Both the Nigerian government and donor agencies put in much effort in analyzing and finding solutions to the increase of poverty level. The Nigerian government in a bid to overcome poverty initiated different programmes and agencies between 1986/2000. They include:

- i) The Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI)
- ii) The National Directorate of Employment (NDE)
- iii) Peoples Bank of Nigeria 1989
- iv) The Better Life Programme (BLP)
- v) The Family Support Programme (FSP)
- vi) The Agricultural Development Programme (ADP)
- vii) National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA)
- viii) The Nomadic and Adult Education Programme established in 1986.

With the return of democracy on Monday 29th, 1999, the federal Government embarked on poverty reduction programmes: it was at this juncture that the birth of NAPEP took place in the year 2000. By 2001, its activities began; its aim was to eradicate absolute poverty. Its schemes are as follows:

- i) Youth Empowerment Scheme, Rural Infrastructures and Development Scheme.
- ii) Social Welfare Scheme
- iii) Rural Resources Development
- iv) Conservation Scheme

The government placed emphasis on complementation, collaboration and coordination between the various tiers of government on one hand and between governments, Donor/Agencies, non-governmental organization and local communities on the other hand so as to implement the programme. A multi-agency implementation structure with coordination,

monitoring and evaluating organ was introduced in order to ensure cost effective delivery and target optimal social benefit.

With all these promises, after about thirteen (13) years of existence and implementation of national poverty eradication programme, it appears that the situation is not better than what it was before the advent of democracy in 1999. What then, using Professor Chinua Achebe's word, is the problem of Nigeria? Over five decades, with the huge sum of money invested in the programme, it is very unfortunate to note that the issue of poverty eradication has proved to be the most difficult challenge facing the developing countries which Nigeria is one of. Poverty eradication was seen as a mean through which the government could revive the battered economy and rebuild self-esteem in majority of Nigerians. President Olusegun Obasanjo on assumption of office in 1999, indicated the poverty situation in which over 60% of Nigerians live below the poverty level requires concerted efforts to prevent it from becoming worse. The government in addition to previous efforts (aimed at poverty eradication) introduced numerous programmes and measures aimed at attacking poverty. They include:

- (a) The launching of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which has poverty reduction as one of the four primary goals (NEEDS document, 2004).
- (b) The Launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme.
- (c) The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP)
- (d) The constitution of the Ahmed Joda Panel in 1999 and
- (e) Ango Abdullahi committees in 2000 (Obadan, 2001)

The immediate concern of the panels or committee was streaming and rationalization of existing poverty alleviation institutions and the co-ordination, implementation and monitoring of relevant schemes. These resulted in the introduction of national poverty alleviation programmes. NAPEP represents an amalgam of some of the previous anti-poverty initiatives and in terms of sustainability, it represents the longest poverty eradication agenda in Nigeria. The impact of NAPEP on the welfare of the poor in quantitative terms is known.

The available studies on the effect of NAPEP are either relatively descriptive or lack analytical depth and rigour. For instance, Udo and Omonona (2002) undertook a quantitative analysis to find out the people's verdict in respect of government poverty reduction programmes in such areas as health, education, etc. Ajulor (2013) used descriptive percentage analysis to conclude that the implementation of NAPEP has not impacted positively on the lives of Ada-odo Ota people of Ogun state. Based on a research, it was glaring that NAPEP has made no statistical impact on the welfare of project beneficiaries in Imo state, Nigeria, and other states generally.

Statement of the Problem

Generally, poverty is seen and addressed as a global problem. Over four billion people are being affected by poverty. To crown it all, most of the people living in developing world of Africa, Asia and Latin America are poor (Gbosi 2004). 45 – 50 percent of sub-Sahara Africa lives below the poverty line on the average. About 43% of the Nigerian population was living below the poverty line of three hundred and five naira per year in 1985 prices, (World Bank, 1996).

The rate of poverty in Nigeria recently is very high. More especially, it is very high among the unemployed, uneducated women and rural dwellers (Gbosi 2004). In 1980, the poverty line was only 28.1% but by 1996, it jumped to 66.6%, by 2004, it got to 54.17%, 2010 to 60.9%.

A rim statistics of the population of Nigeria in abject poverty was recently released by National Bureau of Statistics which said that about 112 million Nigerians live below the poverty line (June 12, 2013, Nigeria politics on line). The report noted that poverty rate remains high in Nigeria particularly in rural areas. These rates declined between 2003 – 2004 and 2009 – 2010, although not nearly as fast as would be expected from the pace of economic growth in the country. While the officially reported growth rate of GDP well exceeds population growth in the country, the pace of poverty reduction does not; this implies that the number of poor Nigerians living below poverty line has grown measurably". A review of the economic history of Nigeria shows that successive governments have expressed concern of the need to alleviate poverty in the nation.

It is very unfortunate to note that issues of poverty eradication has proved to be the most difficult challenges facing the less developed countries (Nigeria inclusive) where majority of the people live in absolute poverty. However, the government has continued to respond in order to ameliorate the worsening conditions of the poor by shifting public expenditure toward poverty eradication. Different poverty eradication programmes and projects to cushion the effects of poverty have been initiated over the years. This was received with high hopes. Poverty eradication was seen as a means through which the government could revamp the battered economy and rebuild self-esteem in majority of Nigerians. Consequently, on assumption of office in 1999, the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo indicated that the poverty situation in which over 60% of Nigerian live below the poverty requires concerted efforts to prevent it from becoming worse. In this vein, the government in addition to previous efforts, (aimed at poverty eradication) introduced a number of programmes and measures aimed at tackling poverty. They include:

- (a) The launching of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which has poverty reduction as the four primary goals (NEEDS documents, 2004)
- (b) The launching of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme.
- (c) The constitution of the Ahmed Joel panel in 1999.
- (d) The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP)
- (e) Ango Abdullahi Committee in 2000 (Obadam 2001).

The immediate concern of the panel or committee was the streamlining and rationalization of existing poverty alleviation institutions and the coordination, implementation and monitoring of relevant schemes. These resulted in the introduction (in early 2001) of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in the year 2001 in Nigeria. Data has it that over N25 billion from 2001 to 2010 have been received by NAPEP for the fight against poverty in the nation. Unfortunately, the level of poverty in Nigeria seems to be unresponsive to these windfall of resources addressed to the fight. Despite the effort/ resources devoted to NAPEP, deterioration in fiscal discipline, corruption and inconsistent policies which had undermined the

past effort still makes poverty eradication programme a paradox. The rate of unemployment has continued to rise as the year goes by.

In a reaction to an allegation of mismanagement of funds meant for the war against poverty in Nigeria by the Nigeria Senate, NAPEP said that it has generated fund from other sources and expended N21.725 billion on the programme from 2001 to 2008. The National Coordinator of the programme and Special Assistant to the President, Dr. Magnus Kpakol explained that since inception in 2001, the programme has gulped N10 billion from state governments and commercial banks for multi-partnership programme and N8.2 billion from Millennium Development Goal (MDG). This totals N34billion, however, the NAPEP boss explained that about N21.7 billion has been spent so far, (Daily Champion Wednesday February 18, 2009 pg. 7). In a motion titled "Dismal Performance of the National Poverty Eradication Programme" Senator Kure observed that poverty has continued to be on the increase with about 70% of the Nation's population currently living below poverty level. He lamented that since its establishment in 2001, the agency has not efficiently impacted on the lives of Nigerians inspite of the huge resources committed through budgetary allocations and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) fund.

Taking a close look at the issue of poverty in Nigeria and the continued effort to eradicate it by the government, if close to N30 billion has been gathered for poverty eradication in 8 years (2001 2009) and these resources are utilized efficiently, there should have been significant improvements in the living standard of the masses and the level of poverty should have reduced drastically.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to examine and give an appraisal of the role government has actually played in poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks:

1. To highlight some of the problems associated with poverty alleviation programmes leading to the birth of NAPEP.
2. To identify the clear objective of NAPEP.
3. Reassess the effectiveness of machineries and tools used by NAPEP to alleviate poverty.

Research Question

- (a) Did the government handle poverty alleviation programmes including NAPEP properly in Nigeria?
- (b) Did NAPEP activities make impact on poverty reduction in Nigeria?
- (c) Why is NAPEP not able to thrive in Nigeria?
- (d) How can the government achieve the main purpose of establishing poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria?
- (e) Can the government establish programmes that can actually alleviate poverty in Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

- (a) It will highlight the existing strategies for alleviation of poverty and the apparent shortcomings will be identified which will help the government and other sectors (international and private) to solve the problem.

- (b) The findings of this study will go a long way towards examining the effectiveness of NAPEP's goals and objectives. In also doing, the study would proffer solution to be taken in correction of any anomaly.
- (c) The study will serve as a referral material for future researchers.

Theoretical Framework

There are many relative theories of poverty as considered below:

The Divine Theory: It seems to be a design accredited to God's nature, that some people are naturally stronger, and more talented. This is an inevitable nature which no one can do anything about it. People profess that the poor are supposed to accept their fate with humility while the rich are entitled to their wealth and only give to the poor through arms giving and other charitable acts.

Poverty as Inequality: Scholars agree that some people have less than others. The inequality of five fingers in a human hand is often used as an analogy to define poor and rich. It could be a machinery to interpret the symmetrical relationship between the poor and the rich.

Culture of Poverty: According to Lewis (1961), some people subscribe to the culture of poverty and with the concept they become apathetic, violent and lack self-control, which reinforces their position. In 1992, Thomas and Anderson explained the culture of poverty as pathological trend in capability by which the poor is unable to acquire the values of comprehensive society.

Subjective Poverty: This refers to whether or not individuals or groups feel they are poor. Subjective poverty is closely related to relative poverty since people are defined as poor in terms of standard.

Shapes and Dimension of Poverty: Poverty, inter-alia, is related to location, Urban, Rural, North or South and the level of household. Poverty reflects regional and structural variations across rural and urban areas, gender differentiations and geographical setting. The impact is uniform and value only in level. It has indirect and direct effects on people. A direct effect can be seen in the virtual collapse of basic infrastructure, like access to good water and sanitation, nutrition, health and education and services. Perhaps due to poverty complexity, like corrosive effect on humanity, many journals, articles and books have tackled the issue of poverty from the effect angles. Poverty destroys aspiration, hope and happiness. Indirectly, it affects positive relations with subordinates, self –esteem and sense of personal competence. It also destroys one's disposition to participating in community affairs, inter-personnel trust and self-satisfaction.

Brief Profile of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

Poverty amidst plenty is the world's greatest challenge and it is expected to be fought with passion. Poverty is said to manifest when the following occur:

- 1) Inadequate access to employment opportunities.
- 2) Inadequate physical assets such as land capital
- 3) Minimal access to credit even on a small scale.
- 4) Low endowment of human capital, natural resources and technological know-how.

Based on her low Gross National product (GNP) per capita, Nigeria has since 1990 been classified as a poor nation, hence, the need for the government to tackle the issue headlong. The aforementioned therefore, provided the grounds for the government establishment of a programme that will aid poverty alleviation in our nation. In 1999, the Federal Government observed that poverty was on the increase in Nigeria despite the large number of on-going effort and programme. In the month of January 2001, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was created with the sole aim of tackling the poverty issue in the country. This was done by the federal government during Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo tenure as President.

There was a massive employment of graduates and undergraduates between 2001 and 2004 and many programmes were launched to alleviate the people's sufferings. In 2006 and 2007, many workers (grade level five and below) were retrenched and paid off thereby taking them to square one. In the past, the government has tried and made attempts to tackle poverty through the creation of institutions and agencies such as Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative Bank (NACB), People's Bank, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), Universal Basic Education (UBE), Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE) etc. Amidst these poverty alleviation programmes, the Federal Governmental identified the following challenges:

- (1) Lack of sustainability of programme and projects.
- (2) Absence of achievable target setting.
- (3) Lack of well-articulated policy for poverty eradication.
- (4) Poor coordination leading to low accountability and avoidable disharmonization of policies.
- (5) Lack of complimentary efforts from beneficiaries.
- (6) Failure to build on sustainability mechanisms.
- (7) Poor coordination of activities etc.

Following a review of the problem, the Federal Government established the need to:

- (i) Streamline and rationalize the function of core poverty alleviation institutions and agencies.
- (ii) Reduce their overlapping functions
- (iii) Ensure effective performance
- (iv) Improve coordination of poverty eradication and improve collaboration with the State Governments, Local Governments and International Donor Agencies.

These were NAPEP programmes:

- (1) Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)
This basically aims at economic empowerment of youths including male and female. It consists of: Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP), Mandatory Attachment Programme (Map), and Credit Delivery Programme (CDP).
 - a) Capacity Acquisition Programme (CAP) – This programme was designed to enable participants, notwithstanding their different levels of formal education to acquire skills, vocational capabilities and performance enhancing attributes in their chosen areas of engagement. These programmes include training attributes in their chosen areas of

- engagement. These programmes include training apprenticeship and investment inducement seminars. The concept of CAP is to recruit, retrain and redeploy the creative capacity of youths so that they can play more productive and self-fulfilling roles in the emerging economic dispensation of government and take responsibility for the up-keep of participants while training.
- b) Mandatory Attachment Programme (MAP) – This intervention initiative was formed under the umbrella of Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) and it was designed to attach graduates who have completed their mandatory National Youth Service and yet to be employed fully. The Federal Government through NAPEP paid the graduates the sum of ten thousand naira (N10,000) monthly, after they have gone through capacity building/training courses in different organizations to provide them with the job training and expose them to skills in their of specialization. This lasted between 2002 and 2003.
 - c) Farmers Empowerment programme – In the year 2005, this programme was introduced to improve the lives and wellbeing of farmers by making available for them the opportunity to have access to loans, farmlands and other farming implements. NAPEP incorporated Agricultural Development Project (ADP) to help provide technical knowledge to farmers. The programme was also aimed at accelerating the attainment of Millennium Development Goals. The money given to those who participated was disbursed through selected farmers' cooperative societies, to go into different kinds of farming like poultry, pigging, rabbiting, etc.
 - d) Multi-Partner Multi Finance (MPMF) SCHEME: - NAPEP under this scheme, partnered with states, local governments, commercial banks, micro finance institutions and others to make available large pool of funds for lending to the poor. In this way, NAPEP stimulated grass roots activities and mass participation in the economic development process through savings and access to funds for the poor across the country. The funds were disbursed through micro Finance Banks to the beneficiaries.
 - e) Promise keeper programme (PKP) – This was a micro credit based intervention scheme of NAPEP undertaken in close collaboration with faith-based organizations (FBO). It was aimed at assisting the less privileged/poor to access a large pool of funds for economic empowerment in line with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of the Federal Government. PKP enables poor members of religious bodies like Churches and Mosques to access micro credit from the pool of funds so created, to undertake viable economic activities. NAPEP provided matching FUND (MF) for a certain sum set aside by FBO for economic advancement of indigent members in their respective fields. Each faith-based organization was given a sum of five hundred thousand naira only (N500,000). This took place in the year 2006 and they were expected to pay back after two year of rotation within their members.

NAPEP Review

Poverty amidst plenty is the world's greatest challenge and it is expected to be fought with passion. NAPEP TODAY is one of the officially published journals that feature the functions of NEPAP from National to grass-root level.

The functions of NAPEP include:

1. To coordinate all poverty eradication efforts in the federation
2. To monitor all poverty eradication activities of the Federal Government.
3. To maintain a comprehensive and detailed database on all activities carried out, assessment of all efforts meant to eradicate poverty in Nigeria and suggest the necessary reviews and policies required to enhance effectiveness.

The role of NAPEP in coordinating and monitoring was carefully put at the Centre of its activities. This enables it to utilize its human and financial resources, to measure their impact, identify gaps and recommend more proactive and intelligence agency to support socio-economic development of the masses. The activities of NAPEP were carried out through four departments, vis: **RESEARCH MONITORING AND EVALUATION DEPARTMENT**– this was previously called the Monitoring & management information system (MMIS) department. The RM & E was responsible for data collection on poverty eradication programmes of all government ministries, departments and agencies, NGOs and the private sectors. Its scope of operations was later expanded and deepened to include the following:

1. Monitoring and evaluation of aspects of development policy strategy, NEEDS as they relate to poverty to ensure compliance with policy direction and identify areas of triplication.
2. Monitor and evaluate collaboration between government agencies, development agencies, NGOs and the private sectors in poverty eradication activities.
3. Conduct continuous education and impact assessment of NAPEP's catalytic intervention programmes
4. Build a comprehensive data bank of poverty activities, programmes and infrastructure in the country
5. Provide the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) and NAPEP's management with regular reports on all poverty related activities, programmes and initiatives.

A database of all government agencies, poverty eradication programmes and infrastructure facilities across the nation was established as one of the best among several government agencies by a survey carried out by consultants commissioned by the UNDP.

An Appraisal of Various Government Programmes on Poverty Alleviation

Successive governments came up the various poverty eradication programmes. There were about twenty four poverty eradication initiatives and programmes introduced to combat the dreaded monster of poverty and unemployment by the federal government from 1970 till date.

Prominent among them are as follows:

1. National Accelerated Food Productive Programme (NAFPP). It was introduced by General Gowon's administration in 1973 because of the shortages of food stuff after the war. The programme's objective was to ensure self-sufficiency and self-reliance in food production by the agricultural sector.
2. Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). This was introduced in the Month of March, 1976 during the Obasanjo's regime with a view of accelerating agricultural production by removing possible constraints to increased food production and the provision of infrastructure and other inputs. The programmes accompanied by three other complementary institutions or projects were designed to make it function effectively.

Listed are other institutions or projects:

1. Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB)
2. Agriculture Development Project (ADP) in each of the states of the federation and River Basin Development Authority (RBDA). Agricultural Development Projects got assistance from World Bank project.
3. In early 1980s, during the Second Republic, the administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari phased off OPERATION FEED THE NATION (OFN) and substituted it with three complementary institutions of the former programmes. The new name gradually disappeared into oblivion with the second coming of the military administration of National Directorate of Employment (NDE). This came into existence during the military administration of Ibrahim Babangida in 1985. The objective includes the promotion of Small scale industries, graduate employment, special public work, vocational skills development and agriculture.

Conclusion

In view of the result of this study, it is evident that rural infrastructure in Nigeria has long been neglected, while investments in health, education, water supply etc were largely focused in the cities. As a result, the rural populations have extremely limited access to services such as schools and health centers and half of the population lack access to safe drinking water. Limited education and poor health perpetuate the poverty cycle. Agriculture which is often the dominant and sometimes exclusive economic activity of the rural sector has suffered setbacks due to limited financial resources and these have stalled development from being a reality in the rural areas. Despite all the laudable efforts at addressing poverty by NAPEP, poverty still persists in Nigeria and this led to the scraping off of NAPEP last year 2014.

Recommendations

These recommendations have been proposed as measures to be taken to ensure the effectiveness of national Poverty Eradication programme NAPEP, and other poverty eradication programmes to be designed in the future. It is sub-classified into the roles the government project planners and facilitators and the community would play to ensure perfect implementations of NAPEP and other poverty reduction programme:

- Adequate funding: if possible, all funds ear-marked for any programme should be made complete before embarking on such programmes. This is aimed at reducing the rate of abandoned programmes on the basis of inadequate funding.
- Political stability and continuity of programmes
- Improved infrastructure.
- The government should adopt punitive measures and show its willingness and readiness to punish those specialized in the act of sabotaging governments' efforts at addressing the problem of poverty in the country. These will serve as deterrent to intending sabotages.
- Inward looking development programmes – Grassroots participation: Most of these development plans were designed, and tested in foreign countries. That these development plans were successful in such countries are not adequate reasons and evidence that it would succeed in Nigeria. The economic situations prevalent in such countries are typically

different from ours, the terrain differs, and everything concerning such countries. The government should look in when designing programmes, not just poverty eradication programmes.

- Proper evaluation of past programmes and why it either succeeded or failed could aid in ensuring the success of subsequent programmes.
- Proper management of such funds as contained in the programme.
- Disbursing resources through the right channels as planned
- Sincerity in project execution.
- Uniformity in project execution.
- The community should take the ownership of these programmes and provide conducive environment for its execution in the interest of all.

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