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POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION

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ABSTRACT

The incidence of poverty in Nigeria has always been high despite the effort of government to put smiles on the faces of average Nigerians living in rural community. The paper aims at examining poverty alleviation programmer and rural development in Nigeria. The paper adopts secondary method and data will be sourced from prints and online publications. The paper discuses review of literature and theoretical framework of poverty as well as the causes of poverty in Nigeria. It also deals with the several poverty alleviation

Introduction

Poverty in Nigeria is widespread, counter to the wealth of the country that include human, oil, natural gas, and solid minerals. This underscores the fact that earnings from the oil had not been properly invested and managed to create the desired multiplier effects on the other sectors of the Nigerian economy which could have reduced the poverty level of the country (Adediji, 2010). The severity of poverty in Nigeria is very glaring when other indicators of services and development are considered. The outcome of this was succinctly captured in the report of the vision 2010 committee which revealed that viz:

a. About 50 per cent of Nigerians live below the poverty line.

b. Only about 40% have access to safe drinking water.

c. About 85 percent of the urban population lives in overcrowded and slum housing environment.

d. Only about 62 percent of Nigerians have access to primary health care.

e. Most of Nigerians take less than one-third of the minimum required protein and vitamins (National Economic Planning Commission, 2004).

The poverty situation of the Nigerian society today is that majority of its members are living in a state of destitution while the

programmes in Nigeria that have been initiated by both government and Non-governmental organizations and its strategic failure. The paper reveals that government as well as non-governmental agencies have put in place many programmers to combat and alleviate poverty but not successful. Therefore, the paper recommends that community self-help should be taken as a measure to complement the government effort in alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

Keywords: Poverty, Community, Rural Development, Government, Nigeria.

insignificant minority are living in affluence. This situation is continually becoming worsened as a result of high profile level of corruption endemic in the political class coupled with insecurity of lives and properties characterized by incessant killings, kidnapping and crimes that are induced by poverty. This chapter examined the multi- dimensional approaches to the concept and definitions of poverty. It examined the poverty situation in Nigeria and assessed the poverty alleviation programmes put in place by different administrations in the country. Based on the premise that over 80 percent of the Nigerian poor live in the rural area, the chapter also discussed the rural infrastructure in the alleviation of poverty in Nigeria.

Concept of poverty

There is hardly a universal way of defining poverty because it affects many aspects of human conditions. However, the conventional concept of poverty depicts it as a condition in which people live below a specified minimum income level and are unable to provide the basic necessities of life needed for an acceptable standard of living. Poverty is a plaque which affects people all over the world, though generally considered as one of the manifestations of underdevelopment. Poverty, as cited in Aderonmu (2010), was defined as lack of command over basic consumption needs (Ravallion & Bidani, 1994), having inadequate level of consumption (Aluko, 1975), and inability of a person to attain a minimum standard of living and high status in a society (World Bank Report, 1990). Nevertheless, to attempt a compromise definition of poverty, one can see it as a condition "where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his/her basic needs (such as food, clothing and shelter), is unable to meet social and economic obligations, lacks gainful employment, skills, assets and self-esteem; and has limited access to social and economic infrastructure (such as education, health, potable water and sanitation), and consequently has limited chance of advancing his/her welfare to the limit of his/her potentials and capabilities

The perceptions as to what constitutes poverty has evolved over the centuries and varied across societies and culture (UNDP, 1997). United Nations (UN) employed two different measures “income” and “human” welfare (Olomola 2000), while Omojine (2000) employed

"Income" level and wages, social, welfare assets, access to basic infrastructure, and affordability in defining poverty.

By the UN approach (using income) poverty relates to the lack of minimally adequate income or expenditures that refers to the proportion of people earning less than one US Dollar (US Dollar) per day (Olanrewaju, 2004). The application of the international poverty standard of US1.90 dollar per person per day (World Bank, 2018) and by the current (2018) exchange rate of ₦355.00 to US dollars; any person earning less than ₦20,235.00 per month in Nigeria is living below the Poverty line. In this respect, an individual is considered poor if he has significantly less income and (material) resources which are inadequate to provide acceptable standard of living. This approach took into consideration the position of various groups on the scale of income. An individual's 3 position in this scale is then compared with the rest so as to ascertain whether such person belongs to the poverty group or not.

On the other hand, the concept of human poverty which was introduced in 1997 by UN Human Development report focused on the denial of opportunities and choices which are most basic to human development which can lead to healthy creative life and enjoyment of decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self esteem and the respect of others. Thus, World Bank (2002) as cited by Adediji (2010) saw poverty as pronounced deprivation in well-being and which arises when people lack key capabilities and so have inadequate income, education poor health insecurity, lack self confidence, powerless and absence of rights.

From the foregoing none of the two approaches is exhaustive enough to fully explain the concept of poverty. Therefore it becomes imperative to combine them in arriving at an acceptable definition. In this direction, poverty can be defined as the state of being in which individuals and groups lack basic necessities of life and are less privileged than other members of the society. Poverty in this sense is more than an economic condition; the horror of Poverty extends into all aspects of person's life susceptibility to disease, limited access to most types of services and information, lack of control over resources, subordination to higher social and economic classes, utter insecurity in the face of changing circumstances including psychologies erosion of human dignity and self-respect (Yusuf, 2000).

However, poverty is a condition of deprivation of basic necessities of life which largely referred to housing, food and clothing. Housing is more than mere shelter because it includes all the infrastructure and services that make housing functional and livable, while food is more than mere filling the stomach with anything edible but nutritional food. In the provision of food, sustainable agriculture becomes an inevitable pillar. In the alleviation of poverty therefore, infrastructure in the rural areas that would promote sustainable agriculture development are two factors that cannot be ignored. The concept of poverty is derived from long and protracted inability to generate productive resources for the purpose of generating desired levels of output in order to enhance the realisation of an appreciable income. 4 This is not unconnected with the use of three (3) different approaches by Olanrewaju (2004) in the identification of the POOR. These are the nutritional absolute approach, relative income approach, and the social well-being approach.

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(a) **The Nutritional Absolute Approach:** This involves the computation of the cost of a list of food items considered essential for good healthy living and added to the cost of clothing for survival. The total of the above was then regarded as the minimum amount needed for an average family to survive population within a given society earning below the minimum amount were then regarded as poor. If this approach is used in Nigeria today (i.e. 2018), Over 95 percent of the population would be regarded as poor because majority cannot boast of "2 square meals". However, there are other conditions through which the poor can be identified. These include poor sanitation, impure water, tardy garbage removal, bad and overcrowded housing. Malnutrition can occur regardless of calorie intake.

(b) **The Relative Income Approach:** This approach essentially based the identification of the poor on the level of income earned by individuals as less than one US dollar per day per person. In the face of rising inflation and the foreign exchange rate in Nigeria, The use of one US dollar per person per day may be considered too narrow and unrealistic for a society like ours (Eveniyi, 2018)

(**c)The Social Well-being Approach:** This approached emphasised on the fact that improvement in basic needs such as medical, housing, education, and regular access to nutritional food and host of others are basis of the identifications of the poor. The limitation of this approach is the appropriate determination of the weight to be attached to each of the social indicators. The limitation of each of the approaches notwithstanding, Olanrewaju (2010) submitted that poverty could only be defined meaningfully within a particular historical setting of time and space. In physical planning, the analysis of spatial distribution of urban poverty is central to urban renewal project (Olanrewaju, 1990) and the root cause of rural poverty is lack of rural infrastructure (Olujimi and Alao 1996; Olujimi 2001, Olujimi 2011).

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Poverty, like many other concepts, has a bewildering conception. Despite the difficulty in defining the concept, various scholars and researchers have attempted its definition under different perspectives.

Attahiru and Haruna (2002) defined poverty as the totality of a state of being where individuals, households or communities are unable to fulfil the basic necessities of life such as food, including water, clothing and shelter as well as other economic and social obligations.

Similarly, Johnson (1966) defined poverty as "a situation when the resources of individuals or families are inadequate to provide a socially acceptable standard of living." In other words, the individuals live below the conventional poverty line demarcating the poor from the non-poor. Iyayi (2005:51), defined poverty as a state of deprivation in the means needed to sustain life at some level of human dignity. According to Alubo (2005:22), Poverty refers to life experience/existence in which people lack food (either because they have none at all or they eat whatever they can to keep alive), shelter (as defined by standard in the community), clothing as well as opportunity to respond to challenges Townsend (1970:42-43) explained poverty in terms of relative deprivation that can be identified by assessing exactly how

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resources are distributed among a population and by what different ranking systems; and assessing what diets, activities, and living conditions are customary in society as a whole from which the poor tend to be excluded. In his analysis of the concept, he argued first of all that poverty of deprived nations can be attributed to the system of international social stratification arising from hierarchy of societies with vastly different resources in which the wealth of some is linked historically and contemporaneously to the poverty of others.

Secondly, poverty of individuals and of families is related to the form of social stratification within nations that tend to be based on the distribution of resources which is understood in a much broader sense than income – cash income, capital assets, employment benefits, public social service benefit and private benefits. Thirdly, he argued that the possession by individuals and families of relatively low resources does not automatically mean they are in poverty unless they are unable to have the types of diets, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities that are customary in that society. Thus, according to him, poverty can be seen as inequities in the distribution of resources including income, capital assets, occupational fringe benefits, current public services and current private services.

Causes of Poverty

There are two broad schools of thought to causes of poverty - Low economic growth and Market imperfections. The low economic growth is associated with increased unemployment and underemployment when the income of those affected may generally not be sufficient for them to maintain adequate standard of living. Market imperfection on the other hand has to do with institutional distortions which would not make for equal opportunity to productive assets. They include ignorance, culture and inequitable income distribution. The International Community has in recent years given attention to the study of poverty in the Sub-Saharan African region with a view to identifying the causes in order to provide appropriate solutions. The World Bank has done much work in this area, with studies like "Taking Action for Poverty Reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1996; and The Social Impact of Adjustment Operations" in 1995.

The following have been identified as causes of poverty - Inadequate access to employment opportunities; Inadequate physical assets; Inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development in poor region; Inadequate access to markets for goods and services that the poor can sell; Low endowment of human capital; Destruction of natural resources endowment; Inadequate access to assistance for those living at the margin and those victimized by transitory poverty because of drought, floods, pests and war; Inadequate participation of the poor in the design of development programmes; Poor maintenance culture or failure to retain and maintain existing structures, leading to deterioration in rural, urban, and high way roads and township slums and drainages. They can be summarized as follows:

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1. The Stage of Economic and Social Development: A situation of economic underdevelopment can be a hindrance to the capacity of a nation to formulate and implement programmes and projects that would enhance real economic growth. In a situation like this, poverty will tend to persist, because economic growth is the first necessary step to poverty alleviation.

2. Low Productivity: Low productivity may be due to obsolescence of human skill or low acquired skill resulting from low education, poor health and physical incapacity. It could also be as a result of inadequate access to productive assets and consequently unemployment or underemployment. This causes poverty since the consuming unit is unable to earn enough income to maintain adequate/decent living standard. Nigeria's human and physical skills have tended to deteriorate with the passage of time as a result of a combination of brain-drain and falling educational facilities and funding.

Constitute market imperfections. Also, the existence of an income distribution structure which is skewed in favor of some classes in the society is a form of market imperfection that renders the less favored class poor.

4. Physical or Environmental Degradation: A classic case of this cause of poverty is readily seen in countries like Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia in Africa. Misuse or over-use of land which results in deforestation, desert encroachment and blight in an excessive shifting cultivation system of agriculture are destructive of endowed land resources, swelling the population of the poor as well as deepening the incidence of poverty. It is the same effect that oil spillage produces from mindless exploitation of crude oil.

5. Structural Shift in the Economy: Inadequate macro-economic management policies usually result in an unwholesome shift in economic activity. Nigeria is a good example of such a structural shift. Before the advent of crude oil, it was a well-balanced economy with five principal export commodities, namely, cocoa, palm produce, rubber, groundnuts and cotton. The country's structural shift occurred when undue concentration was given to crude oil to the neglect of agriculture which provides job for the rural poor. In the progress, the economy became monoculture, while mass poverty became the lot of the rural sector, with the consequent rural-urban drift which also swelled the number of the urban poor. The South-East Asian countries (Malaysia and Indonesia) present good cases of efforts at preventing undesirable structural shift.

6. Inadequate Commitment to Programme Implementation: Much of the policies and program in the Development Plans of the 1970s and 1980s, in Nigeria for example, were not faithfully implemented even when the country did not suffer lack of funds. This failure contributed to deepening poverty. Specifically, the failure to adequately implement the Structural Adjustment Programme after 1990 worsened the lot of the poor, as this led to continued workers' retrenchment and general economic hardship.

7. Corruption: The incidence of corruption has taken a frightening dimension such that Nigeria is now internationally regarded as one of the most if not the most corrupt country in the world. Nigeria is ranked 27, on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), on the 2014

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Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The CPI is based on the damaging impact of corruption on human and economic development, and ranks countries according to the extent to which they are perceived round the world as corrupt. The frightening damage to well- being and economic development of corruption is such the World Bank in collaboration with the Transparency International published a book entitled "**New perspective on Combating Corruption"** in 1998, as means of combating it internationally. At the regional level, the Asian Development Bank undertook a major study which has led to the evolving and approval of an anti-corruption policy in the South East Asian region. The study established the following facts:
a. The total losses due to corruption can be more than a country's foreign debt;
b. Corruption can cost government as much as 50 percent of their tax revenues;
c. Corruption can add between 20 percent and 100 percent to government costs for goods and services.

Past Government and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) Poverty Alleviation Programmes

The first was the *Farm Settlement Option* introduced in 1960's. The intention of the Nigerian government was to develop both the export and cash crops. In 1972, the scheme collapsed but birthed the *National Accelerated Food Production project*. The projective was to create an avenue for testing and adapting agricultural research findings and making such available to farmers. In 1973, *Agriculture Development Project (ADP)* was established to provide credit facilities for the development of agricultural projects, in order to promote integrated rural developments. It was partly financed and executed by the World Bank, but became moribund after a brief spell. *Operation Feed the Nation* came on board in 1976 to arouse in Nigerians, the habit of cultivating food and cash crops in order to be self-reliant. It only succeeded in arousing the awareness of increasing food production without any appreciable increase in agricultural production. In 1977 the *Rural Banking Scheme* was designed to bring banking nearer to the people at the grassroots through granting of credit facilities. In addition the Federal Military Government in 1978 introduced *Austerity Measures* by banning the importation of some goods and placing others on license. Government expenditure was greatly reduced and emphasis was placed on the consumption of made-in-Nigeria goods. But the measures were relaxed in 1979.

In 1980, the Shagari government introduced the *Green Revolution Programme.* To realize this programme, the River Basin Development Authority was formed to assist agriculture and farmers. However, there were many schemes put in place in 1986 by the Nigerian government to alleviate the suffering of the poor. Firstly, there was the *Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP),* designed to put the economy back on the path of recovery. Nigerians were taught to look inward for local sourcing of raw materials. One of its objectives is to lay the basis for a sustainable non-inflationary or minimal inflationary growth. Later the *National Directorate of Employment (NDE)* was introduced which was targeted at the unemployed youths, to train and provide financial guidance. The sole aim was to provide employment, with emphasis on self-

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reliance and entrepreneurship. There was also the *Directorate for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI)* which was targeted at the rural areas. It was sustained through the provision of feeder roads, rural water supplies and rural electrification. DFRRI was formed for community development and social mobilization, community self-help projects, adult education, home economics, rural development, data collection and analysis, and the provision of rural housing and infrastructures.

In 1987, the government introduced the *Better Life Programme (BLP)* targeted at the rural women; the thrust of the programme was self-help and rural development programmes, skill acquisition and health care. There was also the *National Policy on Science and Technology,* meant to boost the development of indigenous technology. In order to give succour to the industrial revolution sweeping through the country the Federal Government set up the *Science and Technology Fund (STF)* and the *National Economic Recovery Fund (NERFUND)* in 1989. This was further boosted, same year, by the establishment of *People's Bank of Nigeria*, targeted at the underprivileged in the rural and urban areas, to encourage savings and to grant credit facilities to small businessmen and women. Community Banking started in 1990 to meet the rural residents' micro enterprises in urban areas through the establishment of banks within a defined geographical area to meet the yearnings of the community. The *Family Support Programme (FSP)* was another poverty alleviation programme, launched in 1994 and targeted at the families in the rural areas. It was supported with health care delivery, child welfare, and youth development. *Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)* was another of the series of poverty alleviation programmes introduced in 1997. It was targeted at the rural areas through granting of credit facilities to support the establishment of cottage industries.

The current poverty alleviation programme from 1999 till date is the *National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)*. It focuses on the provision of strategies for the eradication of absolute poverty in Nigeria. NAPEP is complemented by the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) which is to coordinate poverty reduction related activities of all the relevant Ministries, Parastatals and Agencies. The poverty reduction-related activities of the institutions under NAPEP have been classified into four - Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS), Social Welfare Service Scheme (SOWESS) and Natural Resources Development and Conservative Scheme (NRDCS). Since the inception of the civilian administration in 1999, the following policies have been adopted in poverty alleviation programme.

i. Trade and payment liberalization.

ii. Tariff reform and rationalization for the promotion of industrial diversification.

iii. Deregulation and greater reliance on market forces particularly in the downstream activities of the crude oil industry.

iv. Adoption of appropriate pricing policies of all commodities and

v. Adoption of measures to stimulate production and broaden the supply base of the economy.

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Other schemes and programmes that have been implemented in the past include the following.

- The People's Bank Programme (PBN) established by decree No 22 of 1990. It was designed to extend credit services to the poor.
- The Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), responsible for the rehabilitation and provision of urban roads, water, health facilities, educational materials and agricultural facilities.
- The Oil and Mineral Producing Areas Development Committee (OMPADEC) which provides development aid to the oil producing areas.
- National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) for the provision of agricultural infrastructures.
- The Nomadic Education Programme - to raise the literacy level among the nomadic groups.
- River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA) for the development of the basins of the country's major rivers.

The list has not been exhausted here but in all there are over twenty of these institutions and programmes established by the government in Nigeria with a view to reduce the incidence of poverty. However, it is sad to observe that all these effort have not produced the desired results as they have only achieved modest successes while the level of poverty still remain high.

Several reasons have been given for the failure of these institutions and programmes (Aliyu, 1999, cited in Aluko, 2003, p. 262). First, the fact that some of the functions of these agencies and programmes have been duplicated leading to unnecessary plurality of influences and interests. Secondly, in some cases, the implementation agencies have been wrongly identified and as such roles and functions have been wrongly allocated. Thirdly, contended that in some cases, there is the non-existence of the right or appropriate implementation agencies thus creating gaps in the implementation trend. Again, there is the problem of poor management, poor accountability, high level of corruption and dishonesty, pursuit of parochial interests, poor staffing, incompetence, lack of commitment, among the rank and file of the workers in many of the implementation agencies.

Reasons for the Failure of Government Programmes

A number of factors have contributed to the failure of past poverty alleviation programmes and efforts. Some of them are:

1. Lack of targeting mechanisms for the poor: most of the programmes do not focus directly on the poor.
2. Political and policy instability: this has resulted in frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation, which in turn have prevented the continuous progress of the programmes.

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2. Severe budgetary, management and governance problems: these have afflicted most of the programmes, resulting in either uncompleted, broken down and abandoned facilities, which are most times unstaffed and unequipped.
3. Overextended scope of activities of most institutions resulting in resources being spread too thinly on too many activities. DFRRI and BLP, for example, covered almost every sector and overlapped with many other existing programmes.
4. Lack of accountability and transparency: these made the programmes to serve as conduit pipes for draining national resources.
5. Inadequate coordination of the various programmes: this resulted in each institution carrying out its own activities with resultant duplication of effort and inefficient use of limited resources.
6. Most of the programmes lacked vision for their sustainability.
7. Absence of agreed poverty reduction agenda that can be used by all concerned Federal Government, State Governments, NGO's and the International Donor Community.
8. Lack of cooperation among the three tiers of government.
9. Inappropriate programme design reflecting lack of involvement of beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of programmes. Most beneficiaries were not motivated to identify themselves sufficiently with the successful implementation of the programmes.

Added to the above mentioned facts,

a. There was capacity underutilization
b. There was difficulty of obtaining access to large farm lands and finance
c. Heavy taxation from all tiers of Government.
d. Persistent dependence on imported inputs.
e. Inadequate infrastructure for movement, processing and preservation of agricultural products.
f. High operating costs arising from the private investments in infrastructural support services such as electricity and water supply.

Conclusion

Poverty as the totality of a state of being where of individuals, households, or communities are unable to fulfil the basic necessities of life. The severity of this in rural areas underscore the fact that as much as sixty five percent of the population in Nigeria lack one amenities or the others. Nigeria government with the support of non-governmental organizations have put in place different forms of programmes to combat and reduce poverty in rural areas that are not enough because of failure recorded in some of their programmes. Therefore, the paper recommends that community self-half should be initiated in different localities as a measure

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to complement government effort in combating poverty as well as to promote rural development in Nigeria.

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