



POVERTY VS POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Poverty is an unwanted global phenomenon in that all countries of the world concerned about. In 2015, 736 million people (10 percent of the world's population) lived on less than \$1.90 a day (extremely poor) and more than half of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa. If the trend continues, by 2030, nearly 9 out of 10 extreme poor will be in the region. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with over 190 million people and ranked 7th in the world. The word "poverty" refers to a state of poor standard of living resulting to inability of an individual to cater for his basic life needs. Poverty could be an Absolute, Relative, Chronic or Transient. In Nigeria, many attempts were made by the government to address the menace of poverty, which include Universal Basic Education (UBE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) etc. Thus, it was on this background this paper examined the achievements made from, problems faced by and way forward to some selected poverty alleviation programmes/projects in Nigeria. The paper employed Content Analysis and found that none of these programmes successfully achieved its all set objectives. Furthermore, corruption, political instability, lack of accountability and transparency among others were some of the reasons for the programmes failure. The paper suggests that government should establish ministry of poverty alleviation; most poverty alleviation programmes should be tailed towards agriculture; government should restrict or ban importation of goods and services that we can produce locally.

Keywords: Poverty, Employment, Poverty Alleviation Programme, Nigeria.

JEL Classifications:

Introduction

Poverty is an unwanted global phenomenon in that all countries of the world concerned about. It is a state of deterioration in human standard of living. According to the World Bank (2016) 10 percent of the world's population lived on less than US\$1.90 a day in 2015; nearly 1.1 billion fewer people are living in extreme poverty than in 1990. In 2015, 736 million people lived on less than \$1.90 a day, down from 1.85 billion in 1990. More than half of the extreme poor live in Sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, the number of poor in the region increased by 9 million, with 413 million people living on less than US\$1.90 a day in 2015, more than all the other regions combined. If the trend continues, by 2030, nearly 9 out of 10 extreme poor will be in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with over 190 million people based on the current country's population estimate from National

Population Commission. Meanwhile, according to World Population Review (2018) Nigeria is ranked the 7th after China, India, USA, Indonesia, Brazil and Pakistan among the most populous countries in the world.

It is clear and undisputable that, Nigeria is endowed with both human and natural resources but still ranked among poor countries in the world. A report from Brookings Institution (2018) has shown that Nigeria has already overtaken India as the country with the largest number of extreme poor in the world in early 2018. The report also predicted that, at the middle of the year 2018 Nigeria would have about 87 million people in extreme poverty, greater than 73 million of that of India. Hence, six people become extremely poor in every minute in Nigeria while that of India keeps declining.

For decades, Nigerian government have being coming up with different projects or programmes

with a broad objective to reducing to the barest minimum if not eradicating poverty among the populace. Some of these projects/programmes were: Operation Feed the Nation in 1976, Green Revolution Programme (GRP) in 1980, Directorate of Foods, Go Back to Land Programme in 1983, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFFRI) in 1986, Better Life Programme (BLP) in 1987, National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1987; Family Support Programme (FSP) in 1993, Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) in 1997, Poverty Alleviation Program (PAP) in 2000, National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) in 2001, Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) and The Green Alternative in 2016 respectively, among others. But unfortunately, none of these programmes could be said to have successfully achieved its all set objectives. Instead, Nigeria's

Concept and Meaning of Poverty

The word "poverty" and / or "poor" originated from the Latin word *pauper* meaning poor, which has its roots in the words *pau-* and *pario* that is "giving birth to nothing"; referring to unproductive livestock and farmland (Westover, 2008). Poverty is a relative term and thus is given different meanings by different individuals and institutions. In essence, there is no universally and unanimously accepted definition of the term 'poverty'. But its meaning can simply be deduced from scholarly and institutionally definitions to refer to as a state of poor standard of living resulting to inability of an individual to cater for his basic life needs.

To Mustapha (2014), poverty is a social condition characterized by inadequate access to basic human needs (food and non – food) to the sustenance of socially acceptable minimum standard of living in a given society. In the words of Townsend (1992), poverty is a deprivation of income that may enable people to play the roles, participate in the relationships, and follow the customary behaviour which is expected of them by virtue of their membership in society. According to UN (1998), fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.

Human Poverty Index (HPI) value for 2017 was 0.532; thus put the country in the low human development category and positioned it at 157th out of 189 countries and territories with low human development (UNDP, 2018). Therefore, it is on this background this paper wants to extensively examine the achievements made from, problems faced by and way forward to some selected poverty alleviation programmes/projects in Nigeria.

This paper made use of Content Analysis which is a research tool used for the quantification and analysis of the presence, meaning and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data. Hence, secondary source of data was employed to gather relevant literatures from publications, internet, reports, etc.

Indicators of Poverty

Measures of poverty are used in order to understand, monitor and evaluate social and economic status so as to provide yardstick for human development or otherwise. They are indicators used by policy and decision makers to weigh and judge the impact of events, such as inflation, unemployment, income distribution etc within a country.

Poverty Gap Index (PGI)

The poverty gap index (PGI) is the ratio by which the mean income of the poor falls below the poverty line. The poverty line is defined as half the median household income of the total population. The poverty gap index helps refine the poverty rate by providing an indication of the poverty level in a country. This indicator is measured for the total population, as well as for people aged 18-65 years and people over 65 (OECD, 2018). Thus, GPI measures the gap that exists between the poverty line and the average income of the poor persons living in a particular country and at a particular period of time.

Human Development Index (HDI)

The Human Development Index (HDI) tries to instil a global understanding on how the well-being of people living in a particular country should be. According to UNDP, (2018) the HDI is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. A long and healthy life is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge level is measured by mean years of education among the adult population and access to learning and knowledge by expected years of schooling for children of school-entry age. Standard of living is measured by Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is an indicator which is purposely developed to measure acute poverty. An acute poverty is mainly characterised to include people living below the minimum internationally agreed basic living standard. These are people being undernourished, deprived from or have no access to basic education, clean drinking water, fuel or good healthcare services. According to OPHI (2010), MPI is an index of acute multidimensional poverty and has three dimensions: health, education, and standard of living. These are measured using 10 indicators: two for health, two for education and six for living standards, explicitly shown as follows:

- 1) **Education:** this includes deprivation of child enrolment in schools and adult years of schooling.
- 2) **Health:** this has to do with child mortality and malnourishment.
- 3) **Standard of living:** this takes into account how a household is being deprived either of the following: electricity, drinking water, sanitation, flooring, cooking fuel and assets.

The MPI is the product of two numbers: percentage of people who are poor and the average intensity of deprivation. Hence, a country's rate of poverty is derived from the gap created by the difference between its poverty line and the number of its citizens living below it. Unfortunately, it was noted earlier this year 2018 that 70 percent of Nigerians lived below poverty line based on CIA World Factbook (2018).

Type of Poverty

Poverty is of various forms and mainly four types, namely: (1) Absolute poverty, (2) Relative poverty, (3) Chronic poverty and (4) Transient poverty.

Absolute poverty

To Iyenda (2014), an absolute poverty is subsistence poverty and referred to as a situation whereby an individual suffers the basic needs of life, such as shortage in foods, shelter, clothing and healthcare services.

Relative poverty

To (UNESCO, 2017), relative poverty is seen as poverty in relation to the economic status of other members of the society. That is, what a particular person has not in comparison to his contemporaries. Thus, people are considered poor if their income is insufficient to meet up with the average prevailing standards of living in the society.

Chronic Poverty

Poverty is said to be chronic when it is severe, multi-dimensional and last for a long period of

time. Chronically poor people are characterised by deprivation in many dimensions such as hunger and under-nutrition, unclean drinking water, illiteracy, inaccessibility to healthcare services, socially isolated, exploited and marginalized, low income earnings and assets for their livelihood. Many of them die prematurely from health problems that are easily preventable. The defining characteristic of chronic poverty is its persistence over time, so poverty that lasts throughout life, and/or is passed on to the next generation, is by definition chronic (Moore, 2004).

Transient Poverty

This is the type of poverty associated with inability of families to maintain their consumption level when facing fluctuations or shocks that adversely affect their incomes (Jalan and Ravallion, 1998). Transient poverty is also known as temporary poverty and it occurs within a short period of time as a result of variability of one's income level which makes him worse-off and unable to smoothly cater for basic needs.

Causes of Poverty

There are many causes of poverty but in the context of Nigeria the following are main causes of poverty:

i) Corruption

Corruption has been defined as the misuse of public power for private benefit. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International (2017), Nigeria was ranked 31st most corrupt country in the world (i.e. the 148th least corrupt nation out of 175 countries). For many years, Nigeria has been planning to come up with a macroeconomic policy aimed at boosting production, creating employment opportunities, effective distribution of income so as to improve the well-being of an average Nigerian. But this most a times appeared only on papers, implementation becomes infeasible and all due to corruption. Hence, most people's lives become miserable and fall in the net of poverty.

ii) Illiteracy/Ignorance

Poverty is not only a problem of low incomes but it is a multidimensional problem that includes low access to opportunities for developing human capital and education (World Bank 1994). Education is the backbone of any development and solution to most problems. Poverty in Nigeria is more prevalent in the northern part of the country and this is attributed to higher number in illiteracy and uneducated persons, insufficient skills acquisition centres, poor man power planning among others.

iii) Political Instability and Social Unrest

When a peaceful atmosphere does not exist in an area or country, such affected place is prone to

have poverty. In northern Nigeria, again the North-East is ranked the most severely poverty dominant region in the country (Punch, 2017) due to *Boko Haram* insurgency.

iv) Bad Governance

Bad governance is broadly viewed in Africa according to Jespersion (1992) as long list of dictatorial leaders, non-free media and undemocratic elections. That is to say, any governance characterized by too much corrupt practice, irresponsiveness, human rights abuse and lack of transparency and accountability in public and private sectors, is thereby referred to as bad governance. The resultant effects of bad governance will definitely lead to low production, mass unemployment, increase in social vices, fall in livelihood means and thereby caused poverty.

Solutions to Poverty: A Review of Selected Poverty Alleviation Programmes

In Nigeria, many attempts were made by the past government to address the menace of poverty in the country. Even the present government too is not left behind. But yet poverty is one of the serious issues disturbing the well-being of Nigeria as a nation. Some of these measures are as follows:

Universal Basic Education (UBE)

According to Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) Nigeria, Universal Basic Education (UBE) is educational reform programme of the Nigeria government that provides free, compulsory, and continuously 9-year education in two levels: 6 year of primary and 3 year of junior secondary education for all school -aged children. It was launched in 1999 and took off effectively with the signing of UBE Act in 2004. The programme aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as accelerating national integration and development (Ogunsanmi and Olu, 2014). Unfortunately, insufficient funding by the three tiers of government, inadequate schools, class rooms and other support facilities, lack of enough and qualified teachers, mismanagement of the then existing resources among others were all put together and found to have caused the failure of UBE programme to achieve its set objectives in Nigeria. According to Wold Atlas (2018), list of countries by literacy rate, Nigeria is ranked 177th (i.e. 21st illiterate) out of 197 countries in the world.

National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

Nigerian government in the year 2000 launched the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). The sum of N106 million was set up for the programme which was designed to reduce poverty and provide employment opportunities to more than 200,000 Nigerians. A year after the Poverty Alleviation

Programme (PAP) was replaced with the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The programme (NAPEP) was initiated in 2001 with the following objectives, to: vocationally train youths, support microcredit and create employments. These were ultimately aimed at reducing poverty drastically among Nigerian youths. Contrarily, according to the World Bank, poverty level has been maintaining increase in Nigeria from 2007 to 2018 and at different magnitudes. People who are living below \$1.9 per day are regarded as extremely poor in any society. Reports have shown that in 1985, about 53.5 million Nigerians fell within extreme poor category, 71.4 million in 2014 and as at June, 2018 this figure rose to 86.99 million Nigerians living below poverty line of \$1.9 per day (Proshare, 2018).

Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP)

The potentials of the agri-business sector as a major employer of the growing labour force and earner of foreign exchange have been undermined. As a result, a large majority of the population, many of whom live in the rural areas remain poor (Ofure and Uchenna, 2017). In line with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) development initiatives, to ensuring food security and alleviating poverty in the country through boosting agricultural production, the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) was established and launched by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015.

The objectives of ABP according to CBN (2016) include:

- (i) Increase banks' financing to the agricultural sector;
- (ii) Reduce agricultural commodity importation and conserve external reserves;
- (iii) Increase capacity utilization of agricultural firms;
- (iv) Create new generation of farmers/entrepreneurs and employment;
- (v) Deepen the cashless policy and financial inclusion;
- (vi) Reduce the level of poverty among smallholder farmers;
- (vii) Assist rural smallholder farmers to grow from subsistence to commercial production levels.

Recent reports have shown that the programme has started yielding positive output. According to ECOWAS (2018) Nigeria has gradually closing rice demand gap with increased local production.

According to Chief Audu Ogbeh, the Nigeria Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in the past before 2015, Nigeria spent over five million U.S. dollars a day on rice importation but had now reduced by 95 per cent; that, Nigeria is producing between 5.8 and 6 million tonnes of paddy rice; the number of farmers growing paddy rice has risen from 5 million to 12.2 million; that, there were over 27 large rice mills and over 5,000 small rice mills across the country, processing rice to international standards.

The minister quoted the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) as saying that Nigeria is currently the largest producer of maize in Africa, producing 10 million tonnes, largest too worldwide in yam production (producing about 66% of all the yam in the world), second largest producing in sorghum and the third in Millet (Vanguard, 2018).

Despite of the aforementioned progress so far made by the programme, there are some noted hitches harnessing smooth implementation of the ABP and they include: limited awareness of programme implementation arrangements, overlapping in the roles played by the stakeholders, lack of credible monitoring and evaluation, lack of updated database (Coker *et al.*, 2018).

Reasons for the Failure of these Programmes

A number of reasons have contributed to the failure of poverty alleviation programmes in Nigeria. Some of them were according to Taiwo and Agwu,

Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been evident from the sourced literatures that various programmes were once upon a time initiated by the past and present governments to alleviate poverty among Nigerians. Nevertheless, most of them derailed along the line and thus failed to achieve the desired set objectives due to some reasons, such as corruption, change of governments, and mismanagement of the programmes resources.

Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme which was established and aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty faced a serious setback resulted from insufficient funds by the three tiers of government to finance the programme. Now, Nigeria is ranked 177th literate country out of 197 countries in the world. The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was initiated mainly to create employments for and reduce poverty among Nigerians. Instead, people living in extreme poverty are increasing in the country. As at June, 2018 there were about 87 million Nigerians living below poverty line of \$1.9 per day which is greater than 71.4 million in 2014.

(2016) and Maclean and Kurubo, (2014) as follows:

- i) Political instability: this causes frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation, which in turn marred the continuity of the programmes;
- ii) Most a time, the planners of poverty alleviation programmes are foreigners who may not speak or understand the local language of the people. Even when anti-poverty programmes are designed by indigenes of the country where they are to be implemented, they may not have an in-depth knowledge about the poor;
- iii) Severe budgetary, management and governance problems: these have afflicted most of the programmes, resulting in either uncompleted, broken down or abandoned;
- iv) Lack of accountability and transparency: these made the programmes to serve as media for siphoning public funds;
- v) 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;
- vi) Lack of cooperation among the three tiers of government;
- vii) Dependency on imported goods and services;
- viii) Inadequate infrastructure for movement, processing and preservation of agricultural products.

On the other hand, the Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP) was recently established to ensure food security and alleviate poverty in the country. The programme found to have started yielding good result, in that local production of rice, maize and yam have immensely increased. Though some hitches emerged against proper implementation of the programme, such as limited awareness of the programme implementation, lack of credible monitoring and evaluation, lack of updated database etc.

Hence, taking into cognisance the present poverty index of the country, it can simply be concluded that yet poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria have not achieved its set objectives handsomely.

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are made:

- i) Poverty eradication/alleviation should be part of our Constitutional laws and the mandate of any political party in power.
- ii) Government should establish ministry of poverty alleviation to effectively oversee and ensure continuity of any programme

related to poverty eradication when initiated.

- iii) This paper also suggests that, most poverty alleviation programmes should be tailed towards agriculture, being the fact that the sector is the highest employer of Nigerian employees.

- iv) Government should also restrict or ban importation of goods and services that we can produce locally.
v) Security should be enhanced to encourage both domestic and foreign investments.

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