

Poverty Reduction Programme and Corrupt Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract: Many established poverty alleviation or eradication programmes aimed at reducing or eradicating poverty have not been successful. And the trends of poverty that these programmes aimed to serve have been draining the national resources based on lack seriousness of officials and governance. Nigeria has been experiencing corrupt practices in various governments through their mismanagement and misappropriation of funds, lack of accountability and transparency, arbitrary award and inflation of contracts, embezzlement, bribery, diversion of funds, selfishness, etc. The corruption impedes effective resources allocation and mobilization. The resources are diverted away from activities that are vital to poverty eradication, socio-economic and sustainable development. Corrupt governance encourages an appointment of non-qualified persons into position of handling poverty projects causing poverty alleviation or eradication programmes failure in the nation.

Key words: Poverty • Reduction • Governance • Corruption • Programme

INTRODUCTION

Casely [1] reveals that poverty is the oldest social problem and remains as old as the creation of man on earth. Brown [2] observes that poverty creates unemployment, diseases and inequality which manifest difference strata existence in both developed and underdeveloped nations. Belly [3] argues that poverty humiliates and dehumanizes victims through denying them the taste of their existence where they cannot face their daily responsibilities or meet up their demands. Hassan [4] notes that poverty remains controversial both conceptually and practical measurement that stretches the controversial debate on issues whether poverty is to be alleviated or eradicated in any society.

Oko [5] observes that despite the controversial argument on poverty, the victims in any nation both developed and underdeveloped can be traced through low purchasing power, low productivity, low investment, unemployment, poor health system, poor education system, poor network of transportation system, lack of or inadequate supply of power and stagnation in live.

Aluko [6] views that Nigeria is one of the 26th poorest nations in the world, with more than 65% of the population living on less than \$1 dollar per day. Okonji [7] reveals that poverty has been on the increase since Nigeria's 1960 independence, despite the series of poverty alleviation/eradication programmes and the main victims of the poverty level involved were children, youths and women. These groups of people lack basic necessities of life, voiceless, powerless and lack of access to productive assets in their environment.

UNDP [8] reports that only 25% of the Nigeria population has access to safe drinking water or nice environment, 75% of the population does not have access to the nice environment or health care. Also, citizens consume less than ¼ of the minimum requirements of protein and vitamins due to low level of purchasing power. UNESCO [9] reports that the magnitude of poverty in Nigeria is worrisome and classified the country as the 141 poorest nation, while UNDP [10] development index, where they considered Nigeria as one of the 20 poorest nations in the world with 76% of the population classified as poor and 54.4% living in absolute poverty. Again,

World Bank [11] includes Nigeria in the list of the 15 poorest of the nations with the highest incidence of poverty. World Bank reports that Nigeria population of over 165 million, 120 million live in absolute poverty level of \$1 USD per day.

Timmy [12] describes poverty situation as a bleak future that awaits the nations unless tackled, also poverty alleviation or eradication programmes exist only in national newspapers and have not gone beyond the federal capital territory. Ezennaka [13] views that persistence level of poverty in the nation as equivalent to earthquake that could collapse the nation if not checked. The nation needs an effective social programme or security and a serious fight against corruption so that the money that goes into few pockets is enough to provide jobs for the citizens. Therefore, Nigeria government have been establishing many poverty alleviation or eradication programmes that do not reflect in the welfare of her citizens, it is worth taking a look at some of the indicators of the Nigeria government in the key zones to access its performance at poverty alleviation considerations; such as unemployment, low productivity, high population growth rate, poor human resources development, corruption incidences, debt burden governance, effects of globalization and micro-economic distortion.

Ibekwe [14] observes that the nation's ministry of commerce and industry is empowered with poverty alleviation and youth empowerment programmes, primarily charged with varied responsibility of tackling the issue of poverty among the citizens of the nation by empowering the youth and poor through the provision of poverty alleviation materials and micro credit loans that is expected to improve their socio-economic status. The ministry is also empowered with the responsibility of training and retraining the youth and the poor in various trades with a view to equip them to be socio-economically self-reliant. Egwu [15] notes that to enable the ministry undertake this noble initiatives and responsibilities, the national government should budget a huge amount of money in order to improve the living standards of her citizens. Despite all these huge amounts of money allocated by the national government to poverty alleviation, poverty still persists in Nigeria.

Conceptualization and Assessment of Poverty: Aboyade [16] views that there seems to be in agreement that poverty is a difficult concept to explain, it is easily recognized than discussed. In other words, it is difficult to examine the specific condition about the minimum level of well-being for the state of poverty, the poor in any given

society usually stands out sufficiently in terms of several material deprivation for their wretched condition or situation to be immediately recognized. He explained that, in absolute terms, insufficient total lack of necessities and families was food, housing, medical care, education, social and environmental services consumer goods and recreational opportunities, neighbourhood amenities and transport facilities are sufficient indicators of a state of poverty. Therefore, poverty is more of a relative condition of well-being; mostly people are absolute poverty when their income, even if adequate for survival, fall radically behind that of the community average, they cannot have what the larger community regarded as the minimum necessity of decay and they cannot wholly escape the judgement of the larger community that they are indecent. They are degraded, for in the literal sense, they live outside the grades or categories which the community regards as 'acceptable'. However, what is considered poverty level in one nation may well be known as the well-being in another.

Aluko [6] observes poverty as lack of command over basic consumption needs, such as food, clothing and shelter; the lack of resources to meet the basic needs or incapacities the individual in protecting himself against social, economic, political and health deprivations.

UNDP [10] reports that poverty as not having enough to eat, but a high rate of infant mortality, a low life expectancy, low educational opportunities, poor water, and inadequate health care, unfit housing and lack of active participation in the decision-making process. Anyanwu [17] categorizes poverty based on Nigeria structure, such as; the individuals that are below the poverty line and where incomes are insufficient to provide for their basic needs.

Secondly, the individuals lacking access to basic services to support themselves. Thirdly, the individuals who are isolated in rural areas that lack essential infrastructure. Fourthly, the females who are the head breadwinners whose nutritional needs are not being met adequately. Sixthly, the individual who lost their jobs and those who are unable to find employment based on economic recession. Seventhly, the ethnic minorities who are marginalized economically, socially, culturally, politically, etc.

In other words, the states that poverty manifests itself in different forms depending on the nature and extent of human deprivation. When the minimum level of consumption to sustain human existence becomes important, it distinguishes the poor from the rich or wealthy, the low-income earners and the unemployed

come readily as the stratum of poverty. Mostly, this group of individuals would not have the capacity to provide the basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, even transportation for themselves and their teaming dependants. Finally, poverty is a situation when the resources of individuals are inadequate to provide an essential standard of living, where the individuals live below the \$1 USD daily. ILO [18] observation of poverty as not just as lack of income, but also as lack of access to shelter, health, education and essential services in the nation.

UNICEF [19] reports the criterion for assessing poverty condition is traced to purchasing power based on income network over a period of time. Therefore, when income, especially salaries and wages, are not responsive to purchasing power, which immediately reduces the provision of essential needs of the people; such as shelter, food, clothing, education, healthcare, pipe borne water, transportation, communication, etc. mostly the inability of the general population to provide the basic needs which records on the consumption data or purchasing power and presents that people are exercising poverty in the region at the period.

Trends of Poverty Alleviation Programmes: Madu [20] argues that Nigeria has vast land available for huge rich agricultural resources which offers great potentials for socio-economic growth through mechanized system, such as irrigation; and the absence of natural disasters which deplete resources and causes poverty in many nations. Again, Nigeria has been among the 6th largest oil producers and ranked 1st in the world best refined oil production; if the resources been properly, efficiently and fairly utilize, the nation would have transform into one of the wealthiest and prosperous nations. Basically, the previous government efforts aimed at eradicating or alleviating poverty in the nation were not aimed at poverty eradication or alleviation programmes, but only slogan or paper art which emerged under several institutions or like into many ministries that have existed in several concerned poverty reductions in various ways. Such as People's Bank Programme (PBN), Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA), Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank Ltd (NACB), National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Green Revolution, National Directorate of

Employment (NDE), Family support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), etc.

Despite the enormous human and material resources established or exhausted by past governments to reduce poverty through these bodies, institutions, schemes and programme put in place are yet to produce the required positive impact on the reduction of poverty. Therefore, Nigeria's economy is projected to continue growing, but poverty is getting worse as the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. Yemi [21] views that it remains a paradox that despite the fact the Nigeria economy is growing in proportion but Nigerians living in poverty is increasing every year and that this trend may have increased further in next five years if the potential positive impacts of several poverty reduction programmes and employment generation intervention bodies, institutions, scheme and programme are not taken seriously in the nation.

Poverty Programmes and Corrupt Governance: Egwemi and Odo [22] observed that Nigeria had her independence in 1960, various government had initiated many programmes targets at addressing the poverty reduction or eradication, such as Farm Settlement Option (FSO). The programme was developed both the export and cash crops for the general public, but the programme collapsed. The next was the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NCFPP) which was created as a programme for testing and adopting agricultural research finding and making sure that crops or seeds are available to farmers. Again, was the Agricultural Development Project (ADP) that was to provide credit facilities for the development of agricultural products to promote integrated rural development. The programme was partly financed and executed by the World Bank, but the scheme later collapsed.

In 1976, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was established to encourage citizens in cultivating food and cash crops for self-reliance; which only encouraged citizens spirit of awareness of increasing food production without any attitude of increase in agricultural production. Also, the Rural Bank Scheme (RBS) was introduced in a bid to bring banking system near to the people mostly at the grassroots through the granting of credit facilities. Again, the government established austerity measures in 1978 by banning the importation of some goods and services and serious been on license. The government placed order on consumption of made in Nigeria goods to

reduce expenditure on import duties, but the programme collapsed in the next year. During the 2nd republic of democracy, the government introduced the Green Revolution Programme (GRP) and to make sure this programme is realised, another scheme was introduced like the River Basin Development Authority (RBA) to assist agriculture and farmers.

In 1986, the government introduced Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) to stabilise the economy, to alleviate the suffering of the masses and people were encouraged to seek for raw materials locally. More so, the scheme of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) was established which was aimed at the unemployed people, to train and promote financial support. Again, there was the introduction of the Directorate for Food and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI), aimed at the rural areas; through the provision of feeder road, rural water supplies and electrification and other rural infrastructures, such as 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. Another poverty programme was the Directorate of Social Mobilization (MAMSER) established Directorate and charge with overseeing planned mobilization informed the belief that political and economic changes are better facilitated by a programme of social scheme that seek to bring about commensurate changes in the values, beliefs, attitudes and norms of the people, through the meaningful changes at material production and distribution accompanied by necessary attitudinal transformation (Values held by members) of the nation.

Furthermore, the government established the Better Life Programme (BLP) aimed at the development of rural women, self-help, skill acquisition and healthcare. Later, the government moved to introduce the National Policy on Science and Technology Fund (STF) and the National Economic Recovery Fund (NERFUND). The government to boost these programmes that period established a scheme of People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN) aimed at the under-privileged in the rural and urban areas, to encourage savings and to grant credit facilities to small businesses and women. The community banks were encouraged to give grants to rural people, while in urban areas micro finance bank were in place for the people. Family Support Programme (FSP) was launched and aimed to meet with the needs of families in the rural areas; based on healthcare delivery, child welfare and youth development. Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) was introduced, aimed at the rural areas through

grants and credit facilities to encourage the development of small industries. Currently, the government established the poverty programme such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) that target at the provision of mechanism for the eradication of absolute poverty in the nation. Again, The National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) was introduced as a scheme to coordinate poverty reduction through agencies, parastatals and ministries. Therefore, the poverty eradication was classified into four schemes: Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWEE), National Resources Development and Conservative Scheme (NRDCS), Rural Infrastructure Development Scheme (RIDS) and Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES). All these bodies were empowered with the schemes responsibilities of strategies for the eradication of absolute poverty in Nigeria in the next ten to fifteen years.

All these poverty eradication and alleviation programmes, policies, agencies, bodies established by the government in Nigeria have been established with the mind to eradicate or reduce the existence poverty. But it is ugly condition to understand that all the efforts and financial involvement on these poverty projects have not achieved any meaningful result that poverty remains high in Nigeria. World Bank [10] includes Nigeria in the list of the 15 poorest of nations with the highest incidences of poverty and corruption.

Uma [23] views corruption as the main failure of these policies, agencies, bodies and programmes of poverty alleviation or eradication. Corruption consumes as much as sixty-five per cent of the wealth (resources) of Nigeria especially in each regime, since independence. Nigeria has been experiencing corrupt practices in various governments through the existence of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds, lack of accountability and transparency, arbitrary award and inflation of contracts, embezzlement, bribery, diversion of funds, selfishness etc. Mailey and Planer [24] reports that over USD \$650 billion has been removed from the coffer of the government through corruption between 1960 and 2014, i.e. 54 years.

Corruption in Nigeria government is a serious barrier to national development, which impedes effective resources allocation and mobilization. Allison [25] observes that resources are diverted away from activities or programmes that are vital to poverty eradication, socio-economic and sustainable development. Hence, corrupt governance has resulted to a reduction in the quality and quantity of goods and services available to the public as reflected in poor infrastructure s, poor health facilities, poor quality of educational standards, high cost of living

and rising social insecurity, etc. More so, corrupt governance encourages an appointment of not qualified personnel in position of governance and control of established poverty alleviation or eradication programmes. These are reasons behind tendencies of failure in poverty alleviation programmes and policies. According to Transparency International [26] reports that Nigeria is placed at 120 among 185 corrupt nations covered in the survey index. That is the reason, despite the existence of abundant raw materials and human resources; the nation still experiences poverty, infrastructural squalor, abysmal education and health services.

CONCLUSION

Corrupt governance has affected the development or improvement of the social welfare of the Nigeria citizenry by not providing social amenities such as quality or standard education, potable water, medical care, infrastructural facilities, etc. Odili [27] argues that Nigeria's existence of poverty is based on low productivity and little or no food to eat, unhealthy and sick individuals, poor accommodation, low network communication and unimproved transportation system, poor education and no enlightenment among the citizenry. However, poverty in any nation is observed in their citizenry and their quality of lives. In other words, the existence of corruption in governance affects various sectors of the nation and has serious effects on the citizenry, through the evil spirit of embezzlement, diversion of funds, bribery, arbitrary award and inflation of contracts, misappropriation and mismanagement of funds, lack of transparency and accountability, etc.

Recommendations: There should be establishment of effective poverty eradication or reduction programme that needs high display of commitment, personal sacrifice and exemplary life style and a personnel or leadership act of integrity and honesty. The efforts of leaders should be beyond ordinary formulation and making of policies or programmes. It should be extended to visible and serious acts of leadership in accountability, transparency, integrity, etc.

Nigeria should introduce institutionalized good governance official who should apply the rule of law and transparency which ensure the effective utilization of resources that allows for rapid development and growth with equity in which both the poor and the rich will benefit. Succeeding governments to institute a body to

scrutinize and investigate the governance of their predecessor and to prosecute them seriously if found to be involved in corrupt practices and the same issue with the poverty alleviation programme officials. Therefore, the lack of seriousness or unwillingness and inability of succeeding governments to probe the corrupt governance of their predecessors makes it difficult for the citizenry to take incumbent government serious, the same with the establishment of the poverty alleviation or eradication programmes in Nigeria.

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