

Poverty Alleviation Programmes in Nigeria: A Study of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) (2001 - 2020).

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Abstract

Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and material resources. Despite its vast resources however, most of its citizens are poor. Consequently, poverty alleviation programmes have continued to occupy a centre stage in the development efforts of successive governments in the country. This study aimed at studying the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP); 2001-2020. Data for the study were obtained from secondary sources – books, journals, and reports from relevant government and non-governmental institutions. A quantitative approach was employed for the study. The Social Contract Theory was adopted as the framework that guides the paper. The study revealed that NAPEP schemes have not reduced the rate of poverty in the country due to factors ranging from Corruption, bad governance, ineffective targeting of the poor, inadequate funding, the use of ‘top down’ approach rather than ‘bottom up’ approach, lack of involvement of target groups in policy formulation and lack of sustainability mechanisms among others. Based on the findings, the study recommended that: appropriate accountability and transparency measures should be put in place; distribution of facilities should be done with equity devoid of party inclinations; government should allocate more funds to agencies charged with the task of alleviating poverty; government should involve the target groups in formulation, implementation and evaluation of poverty eradication policies and programmes and effective mechanisms for sustainability of poverty alleviation schemes should be put in place.

Keywords: Absolute Poverty, Eradication, Poverty, Poverty Line, Programmes and Relative Poverty

Introduction

Poverty has become a major problem confronting underdeveloped and developing countries of the world of which Nigeria is one. In fact, poverty is one of the most profound problems bedeviling Nigerians today. Poverty in Nigeria in the words of Jega (2007) has increased, widened, deepened and has become ramified, engulfing the majority of the population. Consequently, the problem of poverty has been one of the main pre-occupations of governments, development experts and workers for a very long time. Nigeria is the largest country in Africa with an estimated total area of 923,768 square kilometres. The country’s population as at 2010 was estimated at 163 million and hosts one sixth of the black population in the world (NBS, 2012; Chukwuemeka, 2010). The country’s population grew to 176 million, 186 million, 195.9 million, 206.1 million and 211.4 million in 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2021 respectively (www.macrotrends.net<countries>NGA). The country is blessed with abundant

agricultural and water resources. It is the sixth (6th) largest producer of crude oil and is potentially viable for natural gas and a variety of solid minerals such as tin, kaolin, limestone, gold to mention but a few.

Nigeria which is tagged by many as the “Giant of Africa” is a land of paradoxes; as it is clearly an inexplicable issue of poverty amidst affluence. This is because it is a country blessed with abundant human and material resources, but majority of its citizens are poor consequent upon a number of factors (Chukwuemeka, 2010). Put differently, despite Nigeria’s vast resources, it has not experienced the necessary economic, institutional and structural changes that would guarantee rapid and sustainable growth and development, and acceptable minimum standard of living.

The poverty incidence in the country recorded increase between the period 1980 -1985, 1992-1996, 2004 – 2008 and 2012-2020. The results also show appreciable decrease in poverty rates between 1985 and 1992, between 1996 and 2004 and a slight decrease between 2008 and 2010. But it should be noted that even with the drop in poverty rates, the population in poverty has maintained a steady increase from 18.3 million in 1980 to 67.1 million in 1996 to 112.5 million in 2010; rising up to 175.2 million in 2020 (Onuka & Oroboghae, 2021; NBS, 2020; NBS, 2014; NBS, 2012; NBS, 2005).

No society can surely be flourishing and happy if the greater part of the population is poor and miserable (Smith, 1977 cf Todaro & Smith, 2011). Also, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute (2007), the incidence of severe and persistence poverty and hunger indicates the incidence of poverty traps- conditions from which individuals or groups cannot emerge without the help of others (Todaro & Smith, 2011). Given the magnitude of poverty in Nigeria, the pursuit of poverty eradication must be rooted in the National Philosophy.

Thus, over the years, public policies have been designed to tackle the problem. With the recognition by the Nigerian government of the multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional nature of poverty, a number of coordinated programmes and policies had been formulated to combat poverty in all its ramifications. (Aisedion & Gaiani, 2009; Nnebe, 2009).

In recent years, three (3) prominent institutions/agencies have been involved in the war against poverty. These are: the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) (2001), the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) (2001) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000). In addition to these, other activities of government include the provision of basic amenities such as social and economic infrastructure programmes to generate employment, enhance income earnings, increase productivity and those targeted at more equitable increase in production and supply of food and increased economic activities. These programmes were aimed at meeting the needs of the poor (Chukwuemeka, 2010).

However, despite concerted efforts made by successive governments at various levels over the years to check the menace, the poverty situation in the country is worsening. This deteriorating posture calls for the questioning of the efficiency or otherwise of the series of poverty alleviation programmes that have been implemented over the years in a bid to curb the trend. This study examines the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) from 2001 to 2020.

Data Collection and Method of Study

Data for the study were obtained from secondary sources which include books, journals and reports of National Bureau of Statistics and other relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions. On the other hand, quantitative approach was used for the study. The data were analyzed using content analysis method.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts John Locke's Social Contract Theory as its guide. The Social Contract Theory is an old concept in political philosophy, but its heyday was the mid-17th and early 19th centuries when it emerged as a leading doctrine of political legitimacy. The theory states that the state is an outcome of agreement entered into by men who originally had no government. The specific parts of the theory have been expounded differently by different scholars. Renowned among such theorists are: an English philosopher and political theorists; Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), a French philosopher, writer and political theorists; Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1779) and an English political and educational philosopher; John Locke (1632-1704) (Sodaro, 2008; Okoli & Okoli, 1990).

John Locke's expression of the Social Contract Theory in clear terms is that men at a certain time freely agreed to bind themselves together under a government, and each person is duty bound to keep to the terms of the agreement. The Social Contract Theory depicts this element of mutual agreement. The compact will spell out categorically the rights and privileges as well as the obligations of each of the partners (Sodaro, 2008; Okoli & Okoli, 1990; Appadorai, 1975).

The choice of John Locke's Social Contract Theory is informed in its adequacy in explaining the origin of nature, the operation of democratic systems which stipulates the duties of the government and the obligations of the governed. In fact, any government wishing to succeed would have to make concerted efforts to achieve the lots of its citizens. The Social Contract Theory (i.e. John Locke's expression) was built upon the premise that the basis of legitimate power is the idea of contract. In an organized society, contract had to be formed between the citizens and the government. As a result of the contract, power to act and regulate is vested in government which is represented by individuals or groups of individuals, these representatives are trustees of the society who are democratically elected.

In relating the theory to the study, it is expected of government as a party to the contract to cater for the welfare of the citizenry. This can be done through provision of employment, provision of infrastructures and social services such as roads, potable water, electricity, communication facilities, schools, healthcare facilities to mention but a few. Deriving from the foregoing therefore, the government uses public policies such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) as instruments to actualize the provisions of the contract.

Conceptual Clarification

Poverty

Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Consequently, it has been defined in so many ways that it is difficult to come up with single working definition. In other words, a concise

and universally acceptable definition of poverty is illusive. The lack of consensus on the definition of poverty is consequent upon the fact that it affects many aspects of human life, including physical, moral and psychological. Poverty as a concept is then complex and multi-dimensional. It is also relative to people, country, context, development approaches and national wealth distribution. Poverty could be absolute or relative. Absolute poverty suggests living below a certain minimum standard in relation to the quality of life; or the situation of being unable or only barely able to meet the subsistence essentials of food, clothing and shelter (Todaro & Smith, 2011). In other words, it denotes a condition in which a person or groups of persons are unable to satisfy the most basic and elementary requirements of human survival in terms of good nutrition, clothing, shelter, energy, transport, health, education and recreation (NAPEP, 2001). In a nutshell, absolute poverty is the situation of all those falling below the established poverty line. The poverty line is the agreed upon budget for basic needs for a society. Relative poverty on the other hand indicates that people are poor in relation to other people. Put in another way, relative poverty measures the income gap or economic distance between the poor and the non-poor. In this case, the situation of the poor is compared to that of more affluent groups. Relative poverty occurs when a person finds himself lacking the necessary resources to enable him live and participate in the normal desirable patterns of life in a given society where the person lives (World Bank, 2004 cf `Yandaki, 2012). The distinction between absolute and relative poverty suggests that trends in income levels and distributions can take different directions; the poverty gap can widen amid economic growth.

Conventionally, poverty is viewed in terms of insufficient income for securing the basic necessities of life- food, clothing and shelter. The concern here is the ability of the individual to command resources for self-sustenance. On the other hand, characteristically, poverty has to do with low economic activity, low production and productivity, low income, low savings, low investment and consequently low standard of living (Nnebe, 2009; Igue, 2005). In the opinion of Lipsey & Steiner (1981) in Shagba (2012:220) poverty is the lack of minimum physical requirements of a person or a household for existence which is so extreme that those affected are no longer in a position to live a life worthy of human dignity. However, most analysts in its most general sense view poverty as lack of necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care and safety. Ravallion and Bidani (1994) in Mboho & Inyang (2011), Igue (2005) refer to poverty as lack of command over certain basic consumption needs; giving rise to insufficient food, clothing and shelter. The description here is that poverty revolves around low income as a criterion. Income represents command over services to meet minimum needs. So, in this case lack of income is synonymous with poverty in terms of basic or fundamental needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

Townsend (1974) in Anzaku (1995) posits that individuals, families and groups could be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diets, participate in the activities and have their living conditions and amenities which are customary or at least widely encouraged in the society in which they belong. On the other hand, Hag (1976) as quoted by Anzaku (1995) sees a society with poverty as one which possesses institutions, rigidities, lack of mobility of labour, unequal levels of education and vastly unequal access to the means of production and wide disparities in present income levels.

However, of all the mentioned forms of poverty, it is financial and material poverty that have enslaved Nigerians and hold them hostage. This is because Nigerians have been facing the menace of poverty caused by lack of income needed to acquire the minimum necessities of life. It can be deduced from the above that poverty can be located within the context of contradiction between the available resources in one's possession and the demand and condition of his environment.

According to Abubakar (2002) poverty can be chronic (persistent) or transient. Chronic poverty according to him is defined as persistent socio-economic deprivations and is linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of skills for gainful employment, gender etc. Transient poverty in contrast is temporary and is linked to natural and man-made disasters. Transient poverty is more reversible but can become chronic if it persists. In the words of Igue (2005) if transient poverty is acute, it can trap succeeding generations.

To the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (1999) as quoted by Igue (2005), Poverty is a state where an individual is not able to cater adequately for his basic needs of 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 capabilities.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defined poverty as "the opportunities and choices most basic to human development are denied- to live long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self-respect and the respect of others" (UNDP, 1997). Like other scholars, institutions, organizations and agencies, the UNDP views poverty as a multi-dimensional phenomenon involving three perspectives viz:

- i. Income perspective: A person is poor if his income is below the defined poverty line.
- ii. Basic needs perspective: A person is poor if he lacks material requirements for minimally acceptable fulfilment of human needs such as food, health, education, essential services, employment etc.
- iii. Capacity perspective: A person is poor if he lacks the basic capabilities to function; such as being well nourished, adequately clothed, adequately sheltered; and the ability to partake in the life of the community (UNDP, 1997, p.16).

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that poverty may be explained in terms of various kinds of factors, including economic, social, political and natural factors.

The Poverty Trend in Nigeria

The national initiatives at poverty tracking in Nigeria started in the early 1990s between the Federal Office of Statistics (now National Bureau of Statistics) and the World Bank. This collaboration culminated in a Poverty Profile Report (1980-1996). This report and subsequent releases by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) served as benchmark for monitoring anti-poverty programmes and policies in the country. The NBS used different approaches in computing poverty indicators. The data used in this paper are based on

Relative Poverty Measurement Approach. This is based on a measure of mean per capita household expenditure (NBS, 2012; NBS, 2005).

Table 1: Trends in Poverty Levels, 1980-2020

Year	Poverty Incidence (%)	Estimated Total Population (Million)	Population in Poverty (Million)
1980	28.1	65	18.3
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.1
1996	65.6	102.3	67.1
2004	54.4	126.3	68.7
2006	69.8	140	97.7
2007	70.6	143	100.9
2008	71	150.3	108.2
2010	69.0	163	112.5
2011	72	165	124.7
2012	74.6	167.2	124.7
2019	82.3	201	165.4
2020	85	206.1	175.2

Sources Adaption: NBS, 2005; NBS, 2012; NBS, 2014; NBS, 2020; Onuka & Oroboghae (2021); www.MacroTrends.net<countries>NGA.

Table 1 above shows the national poverty levels as follows: 28.1% (1980), 46.3% (1985), 42.7% (1992), 65.6% (1996), 54.4% (2004), 69.8% (2006), 70.6% (2007), 71% (2008), 69.0 % (2010), 72% (2011), 74.6% (2012), 82.3% (2019) and 85% (2020). Poverty incidence in the country recorded increases between the period 1980-1985, 1992-1996, and 2004-2008. The results also show appreciable decrease in poverty rates between 1985 and 1992, between 1996 and 2004 and a slight decrease between 2008 and 2010. But it should be noted that even with the drop in poverty rates, the population in poverty has maintained a steady increase from 18.3 million in 1980 to 68.7 million in 2004 and 112.5 million in 2010. The figure rose from 124.7 million in 2012 to 175.2 million in 2020 (NBS, 2005; NBS, 2012; NBS, 2014; NBS, 2020; Onuka & Oroboghae 2021). As a matter of fact, these reports have revealed marked deterioration in the quality of life of Nigerians caught below the poverty line. Apart from these available statistics, one could visibly see jobless and aimless beggars, destitute, sleeps on the streets, lunatics etc.

On the account of poverty in Nigeria, Nnebe (2009) and Chukwuemeka (2010) observed that poor parents begat poor children, thereby creating a kind of dynasty of the poor. This is because as observed by ‘Yandaki (2012) when parents are in poverty, their children are certainly very much expected to be. This is because it will be difficult for such children to pull themselves out due to vulnerability, lack of opportunities, lack of job etc. After all, children raised in poverty tend to miss school too often due to lack of funds and are faced with mal-nutrition, illnesses, and are therefore more at risk of educational under-achievement. Furthermore, Nigerian Educational system tends to emphasize paper qualification at the expense of skills acquisition and crafts. This is in addition to the fact that the educational sector had since been neglected by the government. Consequently, while the children of the poor are out of school, the children of those in affluence turn to the private schools and other countries (Yandaki, 2012).

Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

Poverty in Nigeria is caused by a combination of several complex factors and some of the factors reinforce one another. The following factors among others have been identified.

Corruption

Corruption is believed to be one of the major causes of poverty in Nigeria. The corrupt practices in Nigeria include: nepotism, embezzlement, proxy, undue process, breaking of oaths, dishonesty, inflation of contracts, bribery, abuse of office, extortion by public functionaries, Advance Fee Fraud (419) just to mention but a few. In fact, foreign investors find it difficult to invest in Nigeria because of the corrupt impediments put on their way. There is hardly any form of service that can be rendered without giving or receiving undue favours. Nnebe (2009) observed that the incidence of corruption in Nigeria has progressed from individual to institutional level. The leadership as well as the followership are guilty of corruption in Nigeria with the former being the biggest culprit. Through these aforementioned corrupt practices, the bulk of the nation's wealth have been distributed in favour of the few privileged to the detriment of majority of Nigerians who are now wallowing in abject poverty. Aisedion and Gaiani (2009) corroborated and further added that many native groups in Nigeria believed family relationships are more important than national identity and people in authority often used nepotism and bribery for the benefit of their extended family group at the expense of the nation. Going by the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, Nigeria was ranked 81 out of 85 countries in 1998, 90 out of 91 countries in 2001 and 132 out of 133 countries in 2003 (Alabi, 2009). In 2011, Nigeria was ranked 143 out of 182 countries by this same agency. Moreover, this situation has not changed as the country was ranked 144, 146, 149 and 154 out of 180 countries in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively (www.transparency.org.>countries>Nigeria).

Unemployment

Nigeria since the early 1980s has had a frightening rising unemployment rate that has worsened the level of poverty. The phenomenon assumed crisis level in the late 1980s and early 1990s especially among school leavers and graduates of higher institutions of learning. It should be noted that gainful employment is important for individuals to earn income and escape from poverty (Bukar & Hayatudeen, 2012; Nnebe, 2009). Abubakar (2002) observed that less than ten percent (10%) of graduates of tertiary institutions are likely to get formal jobs; while enrolment into these institutions is profoundly on the rise year after year. In addition, there are also retrenched persons and unemployed (mostly unskilled) school leavers entering the labour market annually and a discomfoting picture of pervasive unemployment rate and by extension a high poverty level emerges. Also, retirees and pensioners are not completely protected against falling into poverty trap in view of the fact that their monthly pensions and once-and-for-all gratuities remain unpaid for years, unless one is ready to bribe the pension personnel upfront. Statistics from the NBS has revealed that unemployment rate in Nigeria was 27.10% in the second quarter (Q2) of 2020 but rose to 33.30% in the Q4 of the same year (Tradingeconomics.com.>Nigeria).

High Population Growth Rate

Statistics shows that in 1980, the Nigerian population was about 65 million, it rose to 75 million in 1985, 91.5 million in 1992, 102.3 million in 1996 and further increased to 126.3 million in 2004 (NBS, 2005). The Nigerian population rose to 140.8 million going by the 2006 population census. The population of the country as at 2010 was estimated at 163 million. It went up to 176.4 million in 2014, 181.1 million in 2015, 195.9 million in 2018, 201 million in 2019, and 206.1 million in 2020. The country's population as at 2021 was estimated at 211.4 million ([www.macrotrends.net<countries>NGA](http://www.macrotrends.net/countries/NGA)). This increase in population has overstretched the basic social and infrastructural facilities as well as public goods in the face of dwindling national resources. The simple conclusion is that resources that could have been invested for economic development are consumed, thereby reinforcing the vicious cycle of poverty (Nnebe, 2009; Nnebe, 2006; Abubakar, 2002).

Debt Burden

In several developing countries of the world including Nigeria, debt burden is assuming increasing importance as one of the drawbacks to their development efforts. Nigeria has a rather high external debt profile. The debt portfolio which was slightly above 14.28 billion US dollars in 1980 rose to about 32 billion in 2000 (Nnebe, 2009). The country's debt burden has continued to surge. Figures from the Debt Management Office (DMO) indicated that as at the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020 it was ₦32.92tn, it rose to ₦33.10tn in the Q1 of 2021 and by Q3 of 2021, the figure stood at ₦38tn (www.proshareng.com). The servicing of the debt has affected the volume of resources needed for socio-economic development. The high debt service ratio translates into resource constraint needed to provide facilities such as hospitals, schools, roads, potable water etc. Productive sectors of the economy such as agriculture, industry and manufacturing are equally constrained leading to low productivity, low capacity utilization, underemployment and low purchasing power thereby pushing majority of Nigerians into abject poverty (Bukar & Hayatudeen, 2012; Nnebe, 2009; Nnebe, 2006).

Macro- Economic Distributors

Nigerian economy is depending on one primary product for over 90% of its exports and government revenue. At independence, the Nigerian economy was almost entirely based on agriculture with the sector accounting for over 80% of employment, government revenue and export. However, crude oil took over since the 1970s, while agriculture the major employer of labour is almost neglected. Scholars such as Nnebe (2009) are of the opinion that Nigeria's economic problem are rooted in the structure of the economy occasion by inappropriate planning, wrong prioritization of policy and programmes and inconsistent policy framework for the productive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing. The Nigerian economy collapsed as a result of the crash of crude petroleum in the international market in the 1980s. The crash in price and production level led to reduction in government revenue and export earnings. This reduction in government revenue was reflected in the ability of government to provide necessary infrastructure for the people (Nnebe, 2009; Nnebe, 2006). As a matter of fact, any slight adjustment of price of crude oil in the international market affects Nigeria's economic fortune adversely.

Conflicts

The social and economic dislocations caused by internal conflicts have impacted negatively on the economic well-being of individuals and families in various ways. Religious and ethnic conflicts coupled with farmers/herders conflicts in many parts of the country, *Boko Haram* insurgency in the North East, armed banditry in the North West, kidnapping and armed robbery in almost all parts of the country and so on lead to loss of lives of principal income earners of many families. It also leads to destruction and loss of crops, animals, houses etc. Those who are not displaced are faced with reduced and inadequate infrastructure and other facilities needed for decent living. According to Nnebe (2006) research has shown that the unfortunate occurrence and in several cases reoccurrence of conflicts in various localities in Nigeria have no doubt contributed to the deterioration of the poverty situation, not only in the directly affected areas, but also in areas affected by inflows of internally displaced people. Also, the uncertainties associated with actual or potential conflict situations also tend to discourage foreign investors willing to invest in the country or even domestic investors (Jev & Yakubu, 2019; Aisedion & Gaiani, 2009; Nnebe, 2006).

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

Public policy is one of the critical pillars of governance. It is about using public resources by public functionaries so as to rationally, efficiently and effectively meet the basic needs and aspirations of the citizenry (Jega, 2003) in Jega; (2007:273). Thus, public functionaries must of necessity be concerned with poverty alleviation which is predicated upon wealth creation, job creation, provision of public goods, social welfare etc. This is to enable the poor and more vulnerable sections of the society to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The approach is to empower the communities, families and individuals through a sustained, well-coordinated, and comprehensive programme of poverty alleviation.

It is against this backdrop that the Federal Government of Nigeria after considering the Ahmed Joda Panel Report on the streamlining and the rationalization of Poverty Alleviation Institutions and Agencies in the country in January, 2000 set up the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to pursue a multi-dimensional approach to tackling poverty. By early 2001, a comprehensive National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was fully drawn up by the Federal Government (Hassan & Musa, 2011; Ajakaiye, 2002; NAPEP, 2001).

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was set up after a thorough appraisal of previous government efforts to tackle the problem of poverty in the country. Series of presidential and inter- ministerial committees reviewed and attempted to harmonize poverty alleviation policies, as well as the functions and responsibilities of a number of poverty alleviation institutions and agencies prior to the setting up of NAPEP (Jega, 2007). Fourteen (14) ministries and a number of agencies were recognized as core poverty alleviation ministries and agencies (NAPEP, 2001).

At inception in 2001, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was gravitated on four (4) main planks. Put in another way, the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was made up of four (4) broad schemes at inception. They are:

i. Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES)

Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES) deals with capacity acquisition, mandatory attachment, productivity improvement, credit delivery, technology development and enterprise promotion. The scheme is meant to provide opportunities, skills acquisition, employment opportunities, wealth creation through enhanced income generation, improved social status and rural development. (Jega, 2007; Ajakaiye, 2002; NAPEP, 2001).

ii. Rural Infrastructures Development Scheme (RIDS)

The Rural Infrastructures Development Scheme (RIDS) deals with rural energy and power supply, potable and irrigation water, rural and urban transportation, communication and water ways and development of jetties. Put differently, RIDS sought to address problems in the areas of power supply, water supply, transportation, housing, communication, land and farm development among others with set targets. These are considered paramount in government's efforts to improve the lots of its citizenry. Consequently, implementing ministries, institutions or agencies will be strengthened to actualize the scope and the mandates of the RIDS (Jega, 2007; Ajakaiye, 2002; NAPEP, 2001).

iii. Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS):

The Social Welfare Services Scheme (SOWESS) is concerned with special education, primary health care services, establishment and maintenance of recreational centres, public awareness facilities, students hostels development, environmental protection facilities, food security provisions, agricultural input provisions, micro and macro credits delivery, rural telecommunication facilities, provision of mass transit, and maintenance culture (Jega, 2007; Ajakaiye, 2002; NAPEP, 2001).

iv. National Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS):

The National Resource Development and Conservation Scheme (NRDCS) focuses on harnessing the country's agricultural, water and solid mineral resources including the conservation of land particularly for the convenient and effective utilization by small scale operators and the immediate community (Jega, 2007; Ajakaiye, 2002; NAPEP, 2001).

Institutional Arrangements for the Implementation of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

The Federal Government established the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) to coordinate its poverty reduction policies and programmes. NAPEC is mandated to ensure that the wide range of activities are centrally planned, coordinated and complement one another so that objectives of policy continuity and sustainability are achieved (Nnebe, 2009; NAPEP, 2001).

NAPEC is chaired by the President while the Vice President is the Vice Chairman. The Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) is the secretary of the council. The membership also includes the National Coordinator of NAPEP and ministers of all economic ministries and other key ministries whose programmes are critical to the goal of poverty eradication (Nnebe, 2009; NAPEP, 2001).

The institutional arrangement was intended to avoid the pitfalls of the previous poverty reduction initiatives which are largely due to policy inconsistency and lack of proper coordination. The established NAPEP is headed by a National Coordinator who is the chairman of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) and reports directly to the president. The NCC has a designated Permanent Secretary from the office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) as secretary. Other members include representatives from the relevant ministries not below the rank of a Director (Nnebe, 2009; NAPEP, 2001).

At the inception of the NAPEP activities in 2001, the Federal Government disbursed three (3) billion naira in order to ensure the smooth execution of various projects under the programme (Insider Weekly, October 6, 2003:45 cf Hassan and Musa, 2011, p. 76). For the 2001 fiscal year, the Federal Government budgeted about thirty (30) billion naira. The sum of two (2) billion naira was shared across the country to each state each year (Hassan & Musa, 2011, p.76). Famous among the projects undertaken was the distribution of two thousand (2,000) tricycles popularly known as “Keke NAPEP” for commercial use to federal civil servants that were retrenched as a result of the civil service reform policy (Nigeria News World, October 13, 2008:15 cf Hassan & Musa, 2011, p.76). Also, sums of money ranging from two (2) to fifty (50) thousand naira were disbursed in form of grants and loans to individuals for business purposes (Nigeria News World, October 13, 2008:15 cf Hassan & Musa, 2011, p.76).

Constraints to the Effectiveness of National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)

A wide range of factors have rendered the NAPEP ineffective as the rate of poverty in the country has not reduced based on the figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The major constraints to the effectiveness of NAPEP are corruption and bad governance which have led to the exacerbation of poverty. As a matter of the fact corruption and bad governance constitute serious impediment to successful implementation of NAPEP schemes since funds meant for the programmes often end up in personal accounts of the policy makers or public office holders. Probes in the country have revealed that government officials and their cabal both during military and civilian regimes become excessively rich people in Nigerian society resulting in unequal distribution of wealth (Jev & Yakubu, 2019; Shagba, 2012; Jega, 2007).

Moreover, ineffective targeting of the poor and inadequate funding has been identified as some of the problems of NAPEP. The former coupled with dishonesty of the people lead to high level leakage of benefit to unintended beneficiaries. While the latter (inadequate funding) to sustain the schemes long enough to let benefits manifest and get entrenched for people to embrace them even without further government support or intervention has been a problem (Shagba, 2012; Aisedion & Gaiani, 2009; Jega, 2007; Olurode, 2002).

Furthermore, another problem is the use of “top down” approach rather than “bottom up” approach. Obviously, more often than not, privileged few designed and implement programmes without consulting relevant stockholders and target groups whose support, co-

operation, compliance and teamwork are necessary for the success of the NAPEP (Shagba, 2012; Aisedion & Gaiani, 2009).

Also, another problem faced by some poverty eradication schemes is lack of sustainability mechanisms and where they do, their life span could still be cut short by a new government that may wish to replace them with their programmes, which will be associated with the regime. The inconsistency and interruptions do not augur well for effective checkmating of poverty (Shagba, 2012; Olurode, 2002).

Conclusion

The study interrogates the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) between 2001-2020. Data for the study were obtained from secondary sources. The result shows that the rate of poverty in Nigeria over the years has been on the increase. Consequently, it is safe to say that NAPEP has not reduced the rate of poverty in the country. The impediments include: corruption and bad governance, ineffective targeting of the poor, inadequate funding, the use of 'top down' rather than 'bottom up' approach and lack of sustainability mechanisms among others.

Recommendations

The challenges for all stakeholders, in the task of eradicating poverty are indeed enormous and may seem daunting, but they are not insurmountable. For as the saying goes, if there is the will, there is certainly a way. Now, based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Appropriate measures to increase accountability and transparency in programme implementation should be put in place. This can be enhanced through ensuring that officials found guilty face the full wrath of the law so that it will serve as deterrent to others. This can be done through the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC).
- ii. There is need to identify and target the most vulnerable groups; particularly women, the disabled and youths to avoid the incentives being hijacked by the elite or getting into the hands of unintended beneficiaries. Politics should be disassociated from poverty alleviation measures. For the fact that poverty does not wear a political party label, then tackling it has to necessarily be on a non-partisan basis. Distribution of facilities and amenities should therefore be done with equity, devoid of party inclinations.
- iii. Government should allocate more funds to agencies charged with the task of alleviating poverty.
- iv. Since it is the poor people that actually understand poverty, being their grinding reality of everyday life, it is appropriate that government should involve the members of the community (the target groups) not just the privilege few or leaders in formulation, implementation and evaluation of poverty eradication policies and programmes.

- v. Effective mechanisms for sustainability of poverty alleviation schemes should be put in place.

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