

ANALYSIS OF CONSTRAINTS FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMME IN JALINGO, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

By issuing its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nation (UN) had declared its intention to alleviate poverty and hunger at a global scale over the next decade. But the perspectives and policies to achieve those goals have not address the failure of previous development efforts of this kind. This study therefore attempts an analysis of the major constraints facing the implementation of poverty reduction programme especially the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in Jalingo local government area of Taraba State. Questionnaires were administered to elucidate needed information from the sample population. Using the "Yaro Yamane" formula for sampling a finite population, stratified and random sampling techniques were used to administer questionnaire to a total of 566 beneficiaries and non beneficiaries. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also used to access expert opinion on constrain to programme implementation. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze responses to questionnaires. The result of the analysis shows that socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent is a major constrain itself as 67.1% of the beneficiaries were aged 15 – 30 years, while 65.4% of the non beneficiaries were age between 31 – 45 years. Other identified constraints include socio – cultural characteristics, ethnic bias, and party affiliation. The Focus Group discussion also validates the research findings. The implications of these findings were thoroughly discussed with respect to the study area and appropriate recommendations were proffered.

Keywords; *Constraint, Analysis, Implementation, Poverty reduction, Jalingo*

Introduction

"If we don't make progress on the MDGs, we are going to have more wars and conflicts... Peace and poverty have a strain relationship" (Turner, 2008). Poverty is both relative and subjective as there is no universal index involve yet, nor does this seem possible. Lipton (1990) however, sees poverty as the state of being in which individuals and groups lack the basic necessities of life and are less privilege than the other members of the society. It therefore implies that poverty is more than an economic condition, because its horror extends into all aspects of human life; susceptibility to diseases, 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 of course its physiological consequences. The erosion of human dignity and self respect. On the other hand, the World Bank (1999) defines poverty simply as hunger; lack of shelter; being sick and not being able to go to school, not knowing how to read; not being able to speak properly, not having a job, fear for the future, losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water, powerlessness and lack of representation and freedom.

Half way into the Millennium Development Goal target year of 2015 when it is expected that nation state should;

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
- Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.

- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Over the years, the Nigerian government has put in place various poverty alleviation programmes geared towards achieving the MDG goals. Some of these programmes include; the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI), Better Life Programme (BLP), Family Support Programme (FSP), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), National Agency for Mass Literacy (NAML), Peoples Bank of Nigeria (PBN), Federal Urban Mass Transit Programme (FUMTP), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), which later metamorphosis to National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). These programmes were established in such a way that about five of them (DFRRI, NALDA, RBDA, ADP and GRP) were suppose to deal with food and agricultural self sufficiency, while four (NDE, MAMSER, CAP and FEAP) dealt with mobilization, participation, employment and skill improvement.

Laudable as these programmes are, recently, Nigeria was rank 54th in the Human Poverty Index (HDI) of the United Nation Development Programme Human Development Report and among the twenty poorest countries in the world (UNDP, 2001). Shawulu et al, (2008) has shown in an appraisal study of NAPEP in Jalingo that the programme is still far from reaching its objective. This is because only the per capita real income of the people is positively influenced, while all other indices of human poverty appears to be negatively influence. The need to critically study and understand the major constraint to implementations of poverty alleviation programmes cannot be over emphasized (Sanderson, 2005). It is against this background that it becomes necessary and imperative to critically analysed the major constraints hindering the perfect implementation and success of poverty alleviation programme especially NAPEP in Jalingo local government area of Taraba State.

Materials and Methods

The study area

Jalingo local government Area of Taraba State lies between latitudes 8011' to 8050'N and longitudes 11005' to 11025'E. It is bounded to the north by Karim Lamido and Lau local government areas, to the East by Yorro local government area, to the south and west by Ardo-Kola local government area. It has a total land area of about 1380km². In terms of relative location, Jalingo is accessible from Benue and Plateau states through Wukari and Ibbi local government areas respectively and through Gassol, Ardo-Kola local government areas from the southern axis. From the northeastern axis it is also accessible from Adamawa through Mayo-Belwa, Zing, Lau and Yorro local government areas on one hand and through Demsa and Numan local government areas on the other hand.

Taraba state has a total population of about 2,300,736 people according to the 2006 provisional census figure. By 1991, Jalingo the study area has a total population of 140,661 people, with a projected growth rate of 3%. Jalingo now has about 243,573 inhabitants. The population is heterogeneous in nature with numerous ethnic groups with varied historical and socio cultural background. The climate of the area is typical tropical in nature with high temperature prevailing most part of the year. The area is dominated by two distinct seasons, wet and dry, each spanning a period of about six months each. The study area is endowed with rich potentials for agriculture. Arable farming and rearing of domestic animals is done at subsistent level.

Data collection

The study identifies the recent poverty eradication programme (NAPEP) for analysis. In this regards the study made use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was generated using questionnaire administration. The sample population consists of two groups (Beneficiaries and non beneficiaries of the programmes). Using Uzoagu(1998) formula for sampling a finite population, out of 214 beneficiaries, 167 were sampled. While out of a projected population of

195,519 non beneficiaries, a total of 399 persons were sampled. Questionnaire distributions were based on electoral council wards. A combination of random but purposive sampling technique was adopted in order to capture some specific elements of the population. Table 1 shows the questionnaire distribution pattern.

Table 1: Pattern of questionnaire distribution

S/n	Elect ward	Beneficiaries	Non beneficiaries	Sample size	Allocaten
1.	Abbare	14	10,306	31.63	32
2.	Barade	21	18,294	53.54	54
3.	Kachalla	14	12,028	35.37	35
4.	Kona	24	36,002	92.28	92
5.	Mayo Gwoj	21	15,601	48.23	48
6.	Majaladi	25	20,732	62.01	62
7.	Suntali	24	12,628	44.57	45
8.	S Dawaka	18	10,603	35.55	36
9.	Tuaki 'A'	28	30,107	83.55	84
10.	Tuaki 'B'	25	29,369	79.51	80
	TOTAL	214	195,519	566.24	566

Source: authors field work (2007)

Secondary data in the form of number of beneficiaries and stipend paid was obtained from relevant government establishment. Also a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held to sample the views of the management staff of NAPEP and stake holders in poverty reduction movements with a view to comparing their opinion and observation with those of the respondents.

Data analysis

In order to sincerely appreciate and quantify the identified constraints noted in the questionnaire, simple descriptive statistics was employed in the analysis. This comprises of mean, median and percentage scores.

Results and Discussion

Socio – Demographic and Cultural Characteristics

Analysis of the socio – demographic and cultural characteristics of the respondents is presented in Table 2. Findings from the respondents show that 67.1% of the beneficiaries of the poverty alleviation programme in Jalingo were aged 15 – 30 years. Though studies have show that the programme was organized to arrest youth unemployment (Shawulu et al, 2008 and Aliyu, 2002), especially those graduating from secondary and tertiary institutions with no immediate prospect for furthering their

education. And though it falls within the aims of the MDGs on poverty reduction namely;

- Reducing by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
- Achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.

Yet the third aim of reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger would have been compromised. This is because 64.5% of the non beneficiaries fall within the age group of 31 – 41 years. This strong virile working age group with their non formal education background enter into marriage early thereby constitutes the family group that have people depending directly from them. If these large proportions of uneducated groups with family dependants are not considered in the programme, then definitely even beyond 2015 the idea of reducing by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger will be a mirage.

The socio – demographic analysis further reveals that the poverty reduction programme is gender bias for Jalingo. 87.4% of the beneficiaries are male. Gender is an important measure of Human Development Index (HDI), and here it shows that the female specie which is most vulnerable to poverty incidence is highly marginalized. No wonder the United Nation (UN) Secretary General in his speech during the thematic debate on Recognizing the Achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track, stated that “Achieving the MDGs also requires that we do more to achieve gender equality and promote women right. We must work to empower women economically to include them in decision making processes at all levels and to combat discrimination and violence against them”.

The analysis also shows that a greater percentage of those who benefited from the poverty alleviation programmes were single and in the African context, relatively free of any responsibility. Considering the adage “Educate a man and you educate an individual, but educate a woman and you educate a nation”. It therefore becomes pertinent to note from the results that deliberate attempts were not made to focus the poverty reduction programme of the Federal

government and Jalingo in particular on the vulnerable groups of the poverty scourge in the Nigerian society. This therefore shows that the socio – demographic considerations of most poverty alleviation programmes tend to constitute the major constraint to its success.

Another constraint to the smooth implementation of the poverty alleviation programme identified from data generated in Jalingo is the socio – cultural composition of the beneficiaries. The result of the analysis presented in Table 2 shows that majority of the beneficiaries (50.9%) had between 1 – 3 children. This falls within the approve number of four children by the Federal government and coupled with the fact that they are beneficiaries; their living standard will not be very bad. The non beneficiaries on the other hand tend to have more children per family, for example, 32.1% have between 7 – 9 children per family. This is the class or group that will naturally need assistance because with this number of children per house hold, meeting their needs like basic education, access to health care facilities, clothing, shelter and of course a balance diet would be quite difficult.

Since NAPEP is a political programme targeted at reducing absolute poverty, it is a common phenomenon in the developing countries that factors like ethnicity would constitute a deciding factor in the successful implementation of the programme. Table 2 also reveals that of the six major ethnic communities in Jalingo, 50.3% of the beneficiaries were from the Fulani (Fulbe) tribe. This clearly shows that benefiting from the programme is highly skewed to tribal inclination. This may likely vary depending on the tribe at the helm of dispensing the programme package. Analysis of non beneficiaries of the programme also shows that in Jalingo, the Mumuye are highly disadvantaged with 32.1% of the sample population not enjoying the benefits of the programme.

Another major constraint identified by this research is political party affiliation. At this point, the beneficiaries were excluded in the analysis because they are part and parcel of the programme. Majority of the non beneficiaries

(74.4%) agreed that membership of the ruling party is crucial to benefiting from the programme. No wonder the non benefiting respondents concluded that the NAPEP implementation in Jalingo local government area of Taraba state is ethnically motivated and politically controlled.

Findings from the Focus Group Discussion

In order to obtain an expert opinion on the research topic, a focus group discussion was organized with administrators of the programme and stake holders in poverty reduction movements. The main findings show that poverty in Jalingo local government area is rather on the increase with a widening gap in income and interpersonal inequalities. The group did not believe that the present effort of the Federal government in reducing poverty through payment of monthly stipends to beneficiaries is good enough to tackle the poverty on ground. Since poverty according to them is multi dimensional in nature, which requires an integrated attempt. They concluded that the current poverty reduction programme was a project designed to fail and a failure so far.

They attributed its failure to reason such as;

- Lack of basic services such as clean water
- Lack of access to basic education
- Lack of access to basic health care delivery
- Lack of assets, such as land, tools, credit and supportive networks of friends and family.
- Lack of steady source of income which affects the supply of balance diet, good shelter, clothing and empowerment (political confidence and dignity).

The focus group therefore unanimously offers the following suggestions as ways of tackling poverty;

- Empower the people through formal and informal education.
- Strengthen the skill base of the people.
- Improve health care services.
- Improve the supply of potable water and sanitary facilities.

- Protect the vulnerable groups.

Conclusion

The study has revealed that poverty in Jalingo LGC is characterized by high illiteracy level, high dependency ratio per house hold and low average monthly income. Previous attempts at poverty reduction in the area have been constrained by socio – demographic, cultural and ethnic tendencies. If the poverty reduction programme is to succeed in Jalingo and all over the federation, there is the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to poverty issues. One that recognizes that poverty is more than a shortage of income. In order to design a workable comprehensive poverty reduction programme, it should be able to strengthen the people's technological and scientific base. Revamp their technical, vocational and entrepreneur education and make optimal use of information and communication technologies to meet the economy's man power needs. Provide an enabling environment and stimulate active participation of the private sector, beneficiaries, civil society organizations communities and development partners in the design and implementation of the programme. It is therefore suggested that future researches should be geared towards critical analysis of funds released for the programme and how it is utilized.

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